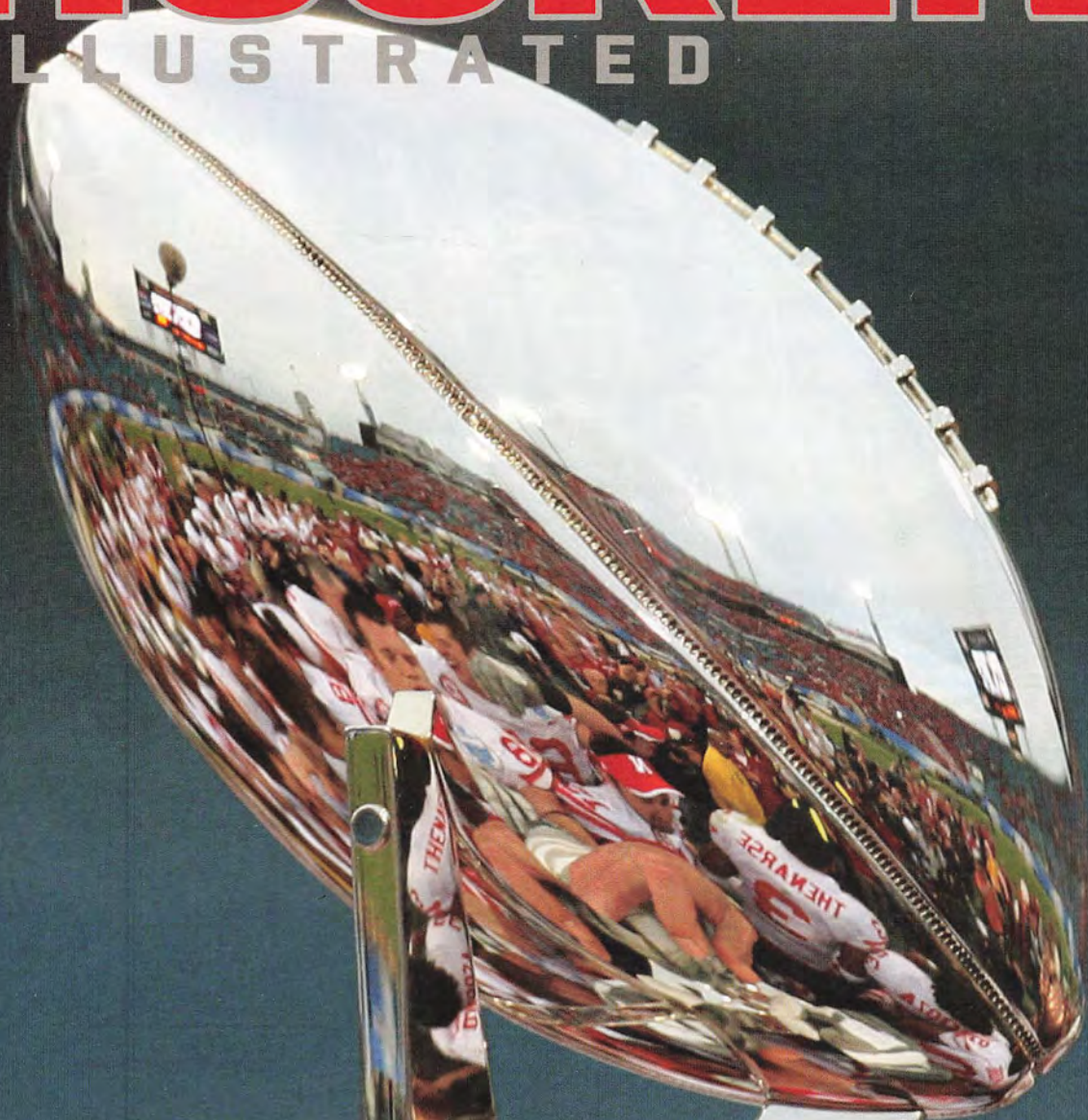


VOLLEYBALL FINISHES SEASON AT FINAL FOUR

THE ORIGINAL MAGAZINE DEDICATED TO NEBRASKA ATHLETICS

HUSKERS

ILLUSTRATED



GATOR BOWL CHAMPIONS

FEBRUARY, 2009 | VOLUME 29 | NO. 2
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Check for updates at huskersillustrated.com.

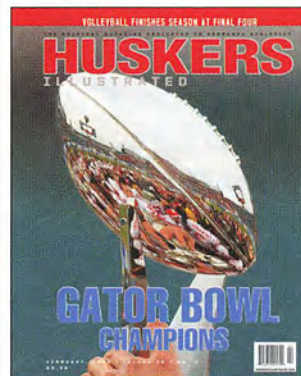
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ON THE COVER

The Huskers can be seen hoisting the Gator Bowl championship trophy after an exciting 26-21 victory over the Clemson Tigers. Nebraska rallied from a 14-3 halftime deficit to win its first Gator Bowl appearance.

Photo by Scott Bruhn



TRUE GRIT

Football and volleyball teams willed themselves to victory in 2008



IT WAS A FALL THAT would have made John Wayne proud.

The star of the 1969 film *True Grit* (and 141 other films for that matter) would have appreciated the grit and tenacity shown by Husker football and volleyball teams this fall.

While the teams may not be remembered as elite teams, the athletes on these teams will be remembered for their heart and reaching (perhaps exceeding) their potential.

The football and volleyball teams shared a number of parallels this season. Both were considered rebuilding projects and not expected to challenge for conference titles. Instead Bo Pelini led Nebraska to a share of the Big 12 North title, while volleyball earned a share of the conference crown.

Volleyball led off with a shocking three-game sweep over Stanford on Aug. 29 at the Qwest Center in Omaha. John Cook's squad flew around the court making great defensive plays and stunned Stanford with their intensity.

Bo Pelini and the Blackshirts unveiled their new look the next day against Western Michigan. Fans were thrilled to see defensive players attacking the ball and out-hustling their opponents.

Over the course of the next four months, these teams won the hearts of Husker Nation, not with blazing speed or power,

but with sheer will and desire. These teams routinely showcased a desire that unmatched by opponents.

The football team's wins weren't always a thing of beauty. But whether it was a Nate Swift punt return, a Joe Ganz scramble, a Ndamukong Suh sack or a Zach Potter blocked field goal, there always seemed to be a leader ready to make that one extra play to secure a win.

I think that's what made wins so special this fall. Husker fans knew they would have their hands full every week. Many weeks, Husker fans didn't even expect a win.

But the players did. And on most days they backed it up.

It will be a tough act to follow next spring. The football team will lose Ganz, perhaps the incarnation of true grit. A number of other holes will need to be filled as well and a daunting schedule awaits.

The volleyball team loses three seniors, one of the winningest classes in NCAA history.

But if next year's teams can find a way to match the desire, will and intensity of the 2008 teams, they will again endear themselves to Husker fans. **N**

Send us your comments or story ideas to huskersillustrated@gmail.com.

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For the first time since 1959, Cornhusker captains were named by coaches on a game-by-game basis. Coach **BO PELINI** was pleased with how that selection system worked. "I think it gives a lot of guys ownership," he said early in Gator Bowl preparations. "I think the players enjoyed it."

"I think it's the right way to do it, so it'll be like that as long as I'm here."

Not long after the Colorado game, for which all of the seniors served as captains, the players then elected season captains, and they were announced at the team's annual banquet in mid-December. All of them were seniors: quarterback **JOE GANZ**, wide receiver **NATE SWIFT**, defensive tackle **TY STEINKUHLER** and defensive end **ZACH POTTER**. Swift, who returned kicks, also represented special teams.

"They were good choices," said Pelini. "The vote was pretty close. We just took the four top vote-getters, and I think some of the other guys could have been voted in, very easily."

Steinkuhler, a captain for the San Jose State and Oklahoma games, was surprised when his name was called. "I wasn't expecting it at all," he said, adding that he "jumped up and down."

OK, he was joking about that. He didn't jump up and down. "I just think it's cool I'm noticed by my teammates," Steinkuhler said. "I'm not that whooping and hollering type of guy."

Waiting until the end of the season to elect captains is "really cool," he said. "It's sweet the way we did it this year because everybody gets the experience of being a captain in a game."

"It's not like you give the designated role at the beginning of the season."

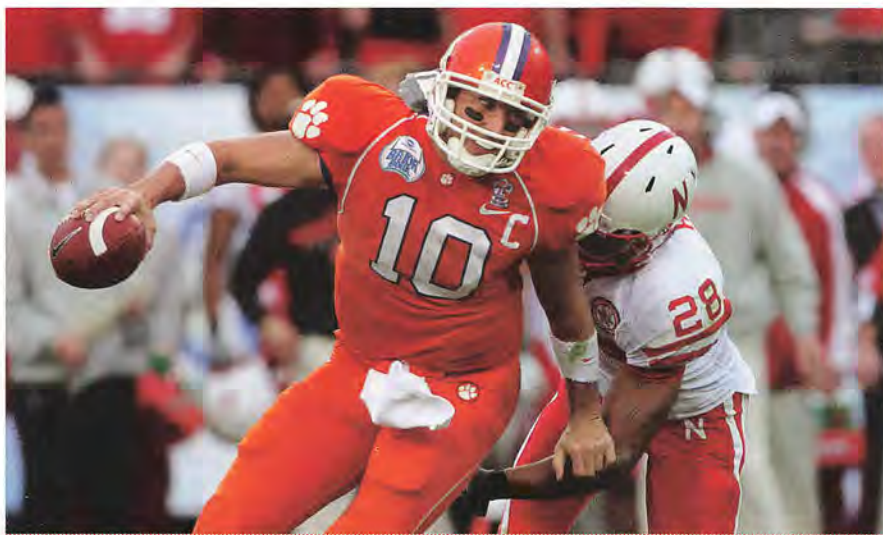
Swift, a captain for the San Jose State and Baylor games, agreed.

"It's a little bit of a change, but I think it worked out a lot better letting a couple of guys experience it, being able to walk out there (for the coin toss), just to be honored," he said.

"The players really get to know you, some of the guys that hadn't known you before, like the freshmen. They really get to see how you are, how you handle things, different situations. So I think it's definitely the best way to do it."

Regardless of how captains are selected, "it's just an honor to be looked up to like that by teammates," Swift said. "Obviously, it's a big honor."

2MinuteDrill



SACK ATTACK: Nebraska sacked Clemson quarterback **CULLEN HARPER** five times. Defensive tackle **NDAMUKONG SUH** led the way with two, increasing his season's total to a team-high 7.5 for 67 yards in losses, also a team-high. The Cornhuskers finished the season with 35 sacks, more than twice as many as last season, when they managed only 13. They had 19 sacks for 169 yards in losses in the final four games. Suh also led the team in tackles for loss and total tackles with 76. The last time a defensive lineman led Nebraska in tackles was 1973, when middle guard **JOHN BELL** was credited with 96.

HEAVY HEARTS

Two days before Christmas, **ANTHONY PELINI**, the father of **BO PELINI** and **CARL PELINI**, died following a lengthy illness at age 85. Bo and Carl returned to Ohio, after the team worked out in Lincoln before leaving for Jacksonville, Fla., on the Friday before the Gator Bowl game.

They rejoined the team for a Sunday practice, after attending the funeral on Saturday.

"My No. 1 motivation is these young men," **BO PELINI** said during a news conference the day before the Gator Bowl game. "I'm in this profession not for me, not for what it does for me personally or the staff or the families. I'm in it for what it does for these kids.

"Anything that affects me, that's all secondary as far as I'm concerned. This is a great time in the life of the kids, the players. And to me it's all about them."

Obviously, however, "it was a difficult week," he said after the game. "I'm just looking forward to taking some time off. I haven't really had time to think about it."

BACKING UP BO

Even though **BO PELINI** tried to keep the focus on the players, they focused on him and the loss of his father. "He always talks about having our back, and as a senior class and a football team, we have his back," quarterback **JOE GANZ** said on the day before the Gator Bowl game.

"We know he's going through a really tough time and we're going to do whatever we can to win this game for him, and everyone on our team. But I think it would make it even that much more special if we could do this for him and pull this off for him. That's just the type of team we are, and that's the type of attitude he's instilled in us. We've bought in. We're always going to have his back."

SIDELINES



BLACKSHIRT FOR BARFIELD

Defensive ends coach **JOHN PAPUCHIS** said he had a surprise for senior defensive lineman **SHUKREE BARFIELD** before the first practice in Jacksonville, on the Saturday before the game. The surprise was a Blackshirt, only the 12th awarded this season.

"The tradition here with the Blackshirts is very important, so to be a part of that is very special," Barfield said. "Of course, that made me go a little harder."

TURNING POINT

The turning point in Nebraska's season was the 37-31 overtime loss at Texas Tech, according to coach **BO PELINI**. The Red Raiders were ranked No. 7 at the time.

"After that game, we walked off the field ... and they finally realized how good they could be," Pelini said. "We had young guys who hadn't experienced a lot of winning yet, and we had some inexperience on the football team in different areas. When we walked off that field, I don't think there was a guy in that locker room who didn't feel like we were a better football team than the team we lost to that day. I think at that point the team started coming together and realized how good we could be."



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Ganz in the record book

Senior quarterback **JOE GANZ** increased his school single-season record for passing yardage to 3,569 and passed **DAVE HUMM** into second place in career passing yardage with 5,126. **ZAC TAYLOR** holds the record with 5,860 passing yards in 2005-06. Ganz also finished second to Taylor in season (25) and career (44) touchdown passes. He was one behind Taylor in each category. In addition, with 239 yards of total offense, Ganz moved up to fourth on Nebraska's all-time list with 5,468.

HAD TO ASK

Junior defensive tackle **NDAMUKONG SUH** was the Cornhuskers' leading tackler in the Gator Bowl game. He was credited with eight, including six unassisted and two sacks. He also blocked a 20-yard Clemson field goal attempt in the second quarter to draw praise from Clemson coach Dabo Swinney. "That

(No.) 93 is a heck of a player," Swinney said. "He's an NFL guy."

Though he had addressed the issue of his leaving Nebraska early for the NFL on more than one occasion, Suh was asked again after the game. "I'm not 100-percent sure, but my mindset right now is that I'm 99 percent (sure of) coming back to school," he said.

"I want to come back and play ball. I love playing for these coaches."

HITTING THE LINKS

The Cornhusker captains had an opportunity to play the TPC Sawgrass golf course. "That was a highlight on my trip, and beating these two on the course was a lot of fun," **ZACH POTTER** said.

JOE GANZ and **NATE SWIFT** also played. **TY STEINKUHLER** did not.

"He's a cheater," Ganz said of Potter, in jest. "He uses foot wedges on every hole."

SIDELINES



'PUNCH' LINE

Clemson was no stranger to the Gator Bowl, having played in the game eight times previously. The 1978 game was particularly memorable because of a punch thrown by legendary Ohio State coach **WOODY HAYES**. Clemson noseguard Charlie Bauman intercepted an Ohio State pass and was run out of bounds on the Ohio State sideline, where an irate Hayes punched him in the throat.

"I remember that; I remember a punch being thrown," Cornhusker coach **BO PELINI** said at a news conference on the day before this year's game. "I just hope there's not a punch being thrown this week, especially by an Ohio guy." He is from Youngstown, Ohio, of course, and has a temper.

But "I don't worry about me," he said. "I worry about my brother (**CARL**)."

Hayes was fired as a result of the punch, before the Buckeyes headed home.

RECORD TOTAL

Sophomore tight end **MIKE MCNEILL** caught three passes for 27 yards. His 32 catches for the season broke the Cornhusker record for a tight end. **JOHNNY MITCHELL** held the record, 31 catches in 1991



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Rozier reflects - some type of headline



The Heisman Trophy means more to **MIKE ROZIER** now than it did when he received it in December of 1983. It means "a whole lot more," he said recently, "because you're coming out of college, going to the pros, making some money (then). You're not really worrying about the trophy. Sure, people say, 'He's the Heisman Trophy winner.' But as you get older, you appreciate it more."

Though 25 years have passed, "people still recognize me because of that trophy, not the things I did in the pros, not the things I did in college, the Heisman Trophy," he said.

He and former Cornhusker teammate **IRVING FRYAR** were at a function in Philadelphia recently, he said, and people recognized him before they recognized Fryar, who spent three of his 17 NFL seasons with the Eagles. "It's crazy," said Rozier. "That trophy opens a lot of doors for me."

"A lot of guys in the NFL I'll be

around, (at) autograph shows, speaking engagements, and people recognize me before they recognize guys that played longer than me or had a better career than I did or broke some records in the NFL, because of that trophy. Every year, I'm still shown on TV. Every year, my name comes up. Those guys' names don't come up. Their statistics don't come up."

Rozier was the Heisman Trophy's 25th anniversary honoree this year at the awards banquet in New York City in mid-December. At that event in 1983, when he received the

trophy, he handed it to his brother and Nebraska teammate Guy, who then presented it to their mom, Beatrice.

"That's her glory. Her son did something positive, something recognized throughout the country," said Mike, who presented his College Football Hall of Fame ring to his dad, Garrison.

"So they both have something," he said.

Being able to give the trophy to his mom meant something to him. But the trophy itself didn't. "I would have rather won a national championship," he said. "The Heisman, only one guy gets that trophy, even though my teammates helped me get that far to achieve it."

"Too bad I couldn't cut it up and share it with them."

Rozier lives in Sicklerville, N.J. His wife, Rochelle, is a lawyer. And, when he's not traveling to autograph signings, speaking engagements and charity events such as golf tournaments, he's a stay-at-home dad to 6-year-old son Michael. His older son

JAMICHAEL ROZIER is a high school junior (and running back) in Klein, Texas. And his daughter **AMBER ROZIER** runs track and field at Colorado.

He gets back to Nebraska during the football season, maintains contact with former teammates and is happy with the direction of the program now that **BO PELINI** is the head coach. "He doesn't need to hear it from me, but I'm just saying he's doing a great job," said Rozier.

Restoring Nebraska's tradition is a Pelini priority. And Rozier is part of that tradition, the second of the Cornhuskers' three Heisman Trophy winners. There have been only 73 in all – Ohio State's **ARCHIE GRIFFIN** won the trophy twice. Rozier is in select company, and always will be.

"Only one guy a year gets that award," he said. "When I'm gone, when I die, my name will still be mentioned as part of the Heisman Trophy elite club."

HEISMAN RESULTS, 1983

1. Mike Rozier, Nebraska
2. Steve Young, Brigham Young
3. Doug Flutie, Boston College
4. Turner Gill, Nebraska
5. Terry Hoage, Georgia

HUSKERS IN HEISMAN VOTING, Top 10

Sam Francis, FB, 1936 – 2nd
Bobby Reynolds, HB, 1950 – 5th
Wayne Meylan, MG, 1966 – 9th
Jerry Tagge, QB, 1971 – 7th
Johnny Rodgers, WB, 1972 – 1st
Rich Glover, MB, 1972 – 3rd
Dave Humm, QB, 1974 – 5th
Jarvis Redwine, IB, 1980 – 8th
Dave Rimington, C, 1982 – 5th
Mike Rozier, IB, 1982 – 10th
Mike Rozier, IB, 1983 – 1st
Turner Gill, QB, 1983 – 4th
Lawrence Phillips, IB, 1994 – 8th
Zach Wiegert, OT, 1994 – 9th
Tommie Frazier, QB, 1995 – 2nd
Eric Crouch, QB, 2001 – 1st

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Jonathan Santin - Fullerton, NE



Occasionally, the buffalo get out. They roam, you might say. But no one in Fullerton gets too concerned. "Everybody knows they're ours," Jonathan Santin said.

If he's around, he'll hop on a four-wheeler and help his dad round them up. The buffalo never roam too far from the farm. "They know where they came from," said Santin.

The Santin family's cattle herd includes a few head of buffalo, "probably 10 now," according to Santin. It's been that way the last "five years" or so.

Why? "Dad and his cousins got a wild hair," said Santin. "They had one when he was younger, and he wanted to relive it, I guess. I don't know."

Even though they share pasture, the buffalo are "definitely different" from the cattle, he said. "They're wild. They'll run through anything. And they can jump like a deer."

If Cornhusker teammates were to visit him in Fullerton, he would show them the buffalo and maybe, depending on the time of year, take them hunting or fishing.

Santin is a self-described "farm boy." It's "in my blood, I guess," he said.

His major is agri-business, which is one of the reasons he's at Nebraska. He considered attending Nebraska Wesleyan, "but they didn't have any opportunities like that," he said. "So this worked out great for me."

What worked out was his being offered the opportunity to walk on, making the decision a "no-brainer." His dad, John, was a Nebraska walk-on in the early 1980s, and he grew up a Cornhusker fan. Coming to games "was a huge deal," he said. "It was always a blast." **N**

JONATHAN SANTIN

6-3, 225, Redshirted freshman,
Defensive end

Hometown: Fullerton, Neb.

County: Nance (county seat)

Population: 1,227 (2007)

Distance from Lincoln: 100 miles

Fullerton Facts:

Dwain Carlson was a co-captain for Bob Devaney's first Nebraska team in 1962. Fullerton is located at the confluence of the Loup and Cedar Rivers, and, according to the town's web site, hunting and fishing are important parts "of the local heritage." The community's Broken Arrow Wilderness area includes "Buffalo Leap," where Native American hunters once drove buffalo off a cliff. The area was home to the Chautauqua from 1898 to 1930, and the first official state Fourth of July celebration was held there in 1844, the web site says.

Nebraska football lettermen:

Brian Schuster, FB (1994-96)

Tom Gdowski, DT (1980-82)

Pat Larsen, S (1980-82)

Dwain Carlson, G (1960-62)

Carroll Zaruba, HB (1957-59)

Frank W. Johnson, E (1907-09)

James C. Porterfield, T (1892)

SIDELINES

ALL ABOUT LEADERSHIP

BO PELINI's nine victories in his first season tied Nebraska's record for a first-year coach.

BOB DEVANEY (1962), **TOM OSBORNE** (1973) and **FRANK SOLICH** (1998) also coached nine victories in their first seasons. Nine victories also tied Pelini for the most among 18 first-year Bowl Subdivision coaches.

"There were some bumps along the road, and you're going to have that, especially the first year together," Pelini said during the final pre-game news conference. "But no one panicked. No one ever pointed fingers. And really, it's due to, not me, not my leadership or the staff.

"It's the leadership of these guys sitting next to me and the rest of the seniors."

Captains **JOE GANZ**, **NATE SWIFT**, **ZACH POTTER** and **TY STEINKUHLER** were with him.

RECEIVING TANDEM

Senior wide receivers **NATE SWIFT** and **TODD PETERSON** each caught a touchdown pass.

Swift finished the season with 10 touchdown receptions, the second-most in Cornhusker history behind **JOHNNY RODGERS'** 11 in 1972. Swift also finished second to Rodgers in career touchdown catches, with 22. Rodgers had 25 in three seasons (1970-72). Swift's 63 receptions in 2008 were the second-most in school history behind **MARLON LUCKY's** 75 in 2007.

Swift set the school record for career receptions with 166 and finished second to Rodgers in career receiving yards with 2,476, just 3 yards shy of the record.

Peterson finished the season with 62 receptions (third on the school list) to bring his career total to 108, fifth on Nebraska's all-time list. His career receiving yardage, 1,602, ranks fourth.



THE BIG 12 BEAT

BY CURT MCKEEVER

Big 12 bowls wild, unpredictable

LEAVE IT TO THE unpredictability of bowl season to make you question the results played out from late August to early December.

It kind of goes along the line of: Did we really put men on the moon?

For instance, the Big 12 proved during the regular season to be, without question, the nation's strongest conference. And yet at the Fiesta Bowl, Texas, which was edged out by Florida by .0181 of a point for a spot in the BCS championship, came about that close to losing to Big Ten representative Ohio State.

(It should be noted that the Big Ten went 1-6 in bowl games.)

This, of course, is why so many folks love the bowl system. It gives leagues that weren't viewed to be overly special another chance to get spiffed up. Sometimes it flies (as in the Pac-10 going 5-0). Sometimes it doesn't (as in the ACC going 4-6).

How did the Big 12 fare before the big game between Oklahoma and the Gators? Thanks to the Longhorns' clutch last drive, an above-water 4-2. Here's a quick look at the Big 12's bowl outcomes.

Alamo Bowl: Missouri 30, Northwestern 23, (ot)

How the Tigers win this beats me. First, Chase Daniel suffers through a three-interception performance. Then, the most accurate kicker in NCAA history, Jeff Wolfert, misses a game-winning attempt on the final play of the fourth quarter.

Somehow, Daniel pulled himself out of his funk and after bobbling a shotgun snap while facing an all-out blitz, connected with Jeremy Maclin for the winning score.

"I've never had something like that," said Daniel, who finished just 27-of-44 for 200 yards. "I was just glad I could help in the end. I was obviously hurting the team very bad in the beginning."

Holiday Bowl: Oregon 42, Oklahoma State 31

Dez Bryant set Holiday Bowl records with 13 catches for 168 yards. But he was sidelined with a knee injury and Zac Robinson, who threw for 329 yards, sorely missed his go-to receiver at the end.

Oklahoma State led 31-28, but had no answer for the Ducks' offense, which racked up 565 yards (307 on the ground).

Even with changes coming on Mike Gundy's coaching staff, the Cowboys still figure on climbing higher in the Big 12 South in 2009. After the bowl game, co-offensive coordinator and wide receivers coach Trooper Taylor and running backs coach Curtis Luper left for positions at Auburn. Before it, defensive coordinator Tim Beckman was named head coach at Toledo.

Insight Bowl: Kansas 42, Minnesota 21

Maybe Mark Mangino's team was out to make KU fans forget that the men's basketball team was unranked at the time.

Whatever. KU sent the Golden Gophers to their fifth straight loss behind an impressive performance by Dezmon Briscoe. He caught a 60-yard touchdown pass from Todd Reesing on the first play from scrimmage and finished with 14 receptions for 201 yards and three TDs.

Reesing, who at one point completed a school-record 13 straight passes, finished with 313 yards and four scores.

KU will lose its defensive anchors in starting linebackers James Holt, Joe Mortensen and Mike Rivera, but with Reesing, Briscoe and receiver Kerry Meier all returning, could enter 2009 as the pick to win the Big 12 North.

Gator Bowl: Nebraska 26, Clemson 21

You'll get the inside stuff elsewhere

in the magazine. Big props to late-game defensive plays by Eric Hagg and Matt O'Hanlon after the Tigers had driven to the NU 10. O'Hanlon broke up a pass in the end zone intended for running back C.J. Spiller.

"I thought I had it," Spiller said. "I make that play in my sleep. He just came over the top and knocked it out."

Cotton Bowl: Mississippi 47, Texas Tech 34

This result threw more than a few for a loop, but the Rebels (who didn't win an SEC game in 2007) came into this having lost their four regular-season games by a combined 19 points. They'd also beaten Florida.

Ole Miss rushed for 223 yards and controlled the clock. Dexter McCluster, who could pass for former Kansas State stick of dynamite Darren Sproles, had 97 yards rushing and another 83 in receptions.

Tech's Graham Harrell added four TD passes to his remarkable resume to finish with a Division I-record 134.

Fiesta Bowl: Texas 24, Ohio State 21

After this one, Longhorns quarterback Colt McCoy offered "I don't think there's anybody in the country who can beat us at this point."

Ohio State was poised until McCoy led his team on an 11-play, 78-yard drive that used up all but 16 seconds of the final 1:42. During the march, McCoy completed seven of 10 passes for 76 yards. The final one went to Quan Cosby, who capped his Texas career by making 14 catches for 171 yards and two TDs.

McCoy went 41-for-59 to wrap up a season in which he compiled a 76.5 completion rate, highest ever in Division I.



Alex Henery

6-2, 175, Sophomore, Kicker, Omaha, Neb.

Hi: Describe the aftermath of kicking the 57-yard field goal against Colorado?

HENERY: I get recognized a little bit more. All of the support is a little bit overwhelming. It's nice. It just shows how much Nebraska is really into football. Something like that still hasn't set in, how big that was and hearing people (say) how historic it will be, comparing it to Eric Crouch, Scott Frost and some of the stuff they did. I'm sure as the years go by, I'll see what it really meant.

Hi: What's your favorite month and why?

HENERY: August, it's my birthday and it's warm. Fall camp starts. It's always exciting.

Hi: Do you have a routine as a kicker?

HENERY: Just like staying loose and joking around. I don't do anything superstitious. I usually joke around. That's about it. That's kind of how I've always been. When I played soccer, in intense matches or whatever, if you just keep your guys loose, I feel like you perform at a better level than if you're all uptight and people are worried about stuff. I saw it when I played soccer, and now I just kind of carry it over, as long as I'm loose, just concentrating and having fun.



Hi: If you had unlimited resources to buy any kind of vehicle, what would you buy?

HENERY: I don't know. I'm not too big into cars, maybe a Lexus or something. I don't know. I'm not a big car guy. Anything that runs and gets me where I want to go is good enough for me.

Hi: What do you have on your iPod?

HENERY: I've owned two CDs in my whole life, so I've never really bought any music. I got an iPod for a bowl gift, so I have my roommate's stuff on my iPod, just random stuff, whatever he had. The CDs were a Matchbox 20 CD and a Green Day CD. I think my brother gave them to me for a birthday gift or something. I don't even know where they are.



Hi: When you cook for yourself, what's your specialty?

HENERY: I don't know. I have this cookbook that I like cooking out of. I can make Cheesecake Factory cheesecake. It's like a white chocolate chip raspberry type of thing. I like making that. I'll make pasta and stuff like that. No one else in my family likes it, so I'll usually end up eating it.

Hi: What do you think you will you be doing 10 years from now?

HENERY: Have a job somewhere. I don't know really. I'm in construction management. You can go work for big construction companies like Kiewit or go off and be a contractor. You can go into teaching it. It's a big field. You can go in many directions.

Hi: Who's the best kicker in the NFL, in your opinion?

HENERY: I watch a few guys. I like Robbie Gould. I like watching him kick. In the conditions he has to kick in he does a good job. He's kind of like me, a smaller guy, built like me. I like watching the guys that went here, too. But I don't watch the NFL too much.

Hi: What's the best movie you've seen lately?

HENERY: I'm not a movie guy, really, so probably the Batman movie, whatever that was called, Dark Knight. That was a really good movie. I don't really like TV, either. I'll watch SportsCenter.

Hi: What do you miss most about playing soccer?

HENERY: Just working with a group of guys on the field and relying on them, probably. With kicking I rely on T.J. (O'Leary) and Jake (Wesch), but it's not like working and scheming, knowing how to beat the defense and stuff like that, the camaraderie, working with guys.



Michael Stephens

Omaha native has big league credentials

Michael Stephens always had an enthusiastic interest in sports. So he figured it made sense to make a career of it.

The 40-year-old Omaha native found his niche in sports marketing as Nebraska's director of corporate marketing, licensing and concessions.

"I enjoy putting on events, I enjoy interaction with fans," he said. "So, about 18 years ago, I thought that might be a pretty good business for me, and it's worked out pretty well."

Stephens, a married father of two, received his master's degree in sports management from Western Illinois in 1994 after receiving his bachelor's degree from Nebraska in 1991. He joined the Husker staff as director of licensing in 2002 and became director of concessions in 2004. In

2007, he added responsibilities as director of corporate marketing.

As part of his duties, Stephens is responsible for managing the athletic department's registered trademarks – for instance, the official "N" logo and the word "Huskers."

"When people like Adidas or other licensees use them on apparel or non-apparel items, and sell them, we get royalty off of that," he said. Stephens helps oversee that process.

He came to NU after two years as manager of corporate sponsorship sales with the Kansas City Royals Major League Baseball club. Before that, he spent eight years with the Omaha Golden Spikes organization, including five years as director of marketing.



Stephens obviously enjoyed his time in the Royals' organization. Now, of course, he's glad to be a Husker.

"Major League Baseball is pretty cool," he said. "It's a neat experience to have major league teams come in (to Kansas City, Mo.) and watch the Royals play in a world-class facility like Kauffman Stadium. I really enjoyed my time there. Yet when this opportunity came here in the summer of 2002, it was something I couldn't pass up.

"I felt like it was a job I could take that would allow me to go and raise our kids for 15, 20 years and spend my time in Lincoln while I'm raising my family."

Catching up with BY MIKE BABCOCK

Tom Banderas

Banderas was a star before the "stars"

Tom Banderas would have been a five-star recruit out of high school in Oak Grove, Mo. But star-rankings were still a thing of the future in 1983, when he picked Nebraska from the list of schools that offered him a scholarship. The list included the nation's best, prominent among them Notre Dame, Southern California, Texas and Oklahoma, the other schools besides Nebraska to which he took official recruiting trips. He also visited Missouri on his own.

He didn't know much about Nebraska or any of the other schools because he preferred pro football at the time. But the Cornhuskers were his clear-cut choice. For one thing, Nebraska was close enough to home that his dad could attend the games. For another, his dad told him to pick a program with

coaching stability, and the Cornhuskers had that in Tom Osborne and his staff.

Though more of an H-back in high school, a receiving tight end, Banderas became an outstanding blocker, developed under the direction of tight ends and wingbacks coach Gene Huey and by going one-on-one against two-time All-America defensive end Broderick Thomas during practice. At the same time, he made the most of infrequent opportunities to catch passes. He had only 16 pass receptions during his Cornhusker career, 10 of them for touchdowns.

"I was kind of a plodder, a blue-collar, blocking type guy," said Banderas. "I just think that good, old-fashioned, blue-collar work ethic is what I learned."

TOM BANDERAS

LETTERS: 1985-87

POSITION: Tight end

CURRENT: Farm Bureau Insurance, Lincoln, Neb.

WIFE: Amy

CHILDREN: Diane (15), Joshua (13), Anthony (8)

And Nebraska was the place to learn it. "Everyone always says hindsight is 20-20. My only testimony to Nebraska is this: If I had to do it all over again, I would come to Nebraska. That's all I can tell you. I don't really need to say any more than that," he said.

ON HIS EXPERIENCE AT NEBRASKA:

"I loved the whole thing. I think at the time, thinking back, I wished I would have absorbed more of it. I'm kind of an in-the-moment guy that once it goes by I'm on to today or the future. I've always been that way, so I didn't fully appreciate the teams we had. Looking back, reminiscing, hell, we were good."

Closing out strong

BY RICK SHAW

The Nebraska coaching staff nearly wrapped up their recruiting efforts for 2009 with a strong month of December. Four more prospects jumped onto the Husker commit list, bringing the total number of pledges to 23.

Though the Big Red will likely still try to add one or two more athletes to the list between now and early February, the 2009 signing class is largely complete. Rivals.com currently ranks the group as the 22nd best class in the country.

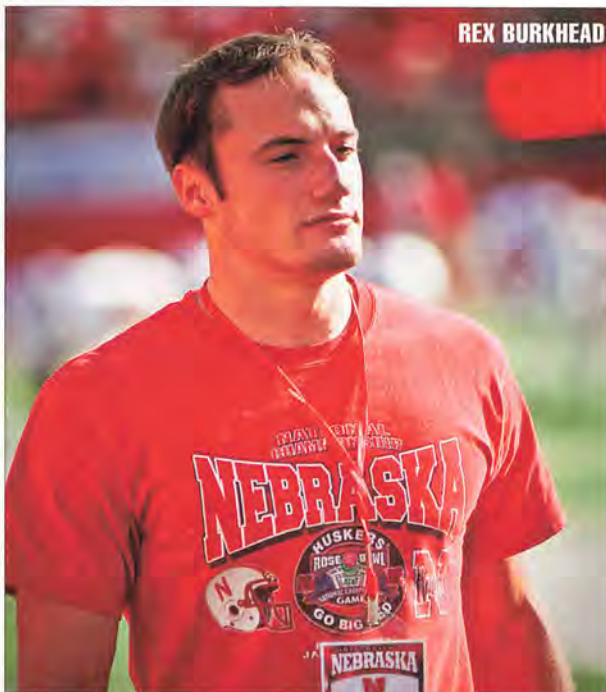
The Huskers were able to add some shine to an already solid class by grabbing the pledges of two four-star athletes during the weeks leading up to Christmas.

REX BURKHEAD, a 5-11, 190-pound runningback out of Plano (Texas) joined the Nebraska fold after mulling over scholarship offers from Auburn, California, Louisville, Michigan, Ole Miss, Stanford, Texas A&M, Texas Tech, Virginia and others. Rated the No. 11 all-purpose back (four-stars) and among the top 250 seniors in the country by Rivals, Burkhead said he's excited to be a Husker.

"It was really everything about Nebraska - the student body, the coaches, the players, the academics," Burkhead said. "I can just see myself being there for the next four years."

"They (Nebraska) feel that I could be a back who could catch the ball out of the backfield, as well as pass-block and run the ball. I'd be an all-purpose type of back for them."

A first-team all-state honoree in 2008,



REX BURKHEAD

Burkhead rushed for 1,762 yards and 28 touchdowns and added 594 yards and another five scores on receptions. He also used his speed (4.4-second 40-yard dash) and athleticism (38-inch vertical jump) to average 36 yards on kick returns and 28 yards on punt returns.

"Anytime you're athletic, you can catch, run, return kicks, I think it will transfer pretty easily," Plano head coach Jaydon McCullough said. "Not only that, he's like having an extra coach out on the field. I can tell you this, he's the kind of kid that's going to be totally focused on going to Nebraska and making an impact. I look forward to watching it."

Another member of the 'Rivals250', **JASON ANKRAH** of Gaithersburg (Md.) Quince Orchard, jumped onto the Husker commit list right before Christmas. The 6-4, 248-pound athlete is rated the nation's

No. 10 strongside defensive end prospect (four-stars) by Rivals.

"The people there (at Nebraska) are cool, the atmosphere is amazing and it's a place I want to be," Ankrah said. "The coaching staff, I like all of them. I felt comfortable with them and the players are cool, outgoing and fun."

"They are a brand new staff and went 8-4 this past year. They shouldn't have lost two games and could have been 10-2. I'm anxious to see what they do the next couple years. I also like Coach **(BO) PELINI**. He's known for defenses and how much he cares about his players.

He's a religious guy and those things caught my eye."

Ankrah earned first-team all-state honors as a senior after racking up 55 tackles, 14 tackles for loss and eight sacks. He chose Nebraska over offers from Clemson, Maryland, Michigan, Virginia Tech and others.

"The football part (of Nebraska) is amazing and the facilities are, wow," Ankrah said.

"The coaches said if I come in and work hard like I did in high school I have a chance of playing as a freshman. They have some people leaving and they can put me in the rotation."

Another highly rated target, cornerback **ANDREW GREEN** of San Antonio (Texas) James Madison, also joined the Husker fold. Rated among the top 50 prospects in the state and the third "Most Physical"

cornerback in the country by Rivals (three-stars), Green hopes to battle for immediate playing time in Lincoln.

"It's where my heart felt right," Green said. "I wasn't trying to do that many interviews, and I was just trying to clear my mind and think because I had a lot going on and stuff. I just kept praying and praying about where I should go. It's what felt right."

"I'm going to be physical once I get there. If I get redshirted, that's fine too because it will make me a better player."

Green also visited Iowa State, Missouri and Oklahoma State before finalizing his pledge with Nebraska. He also considered scholarship offers from Baylor, Colorado, Houston, Kansas, Purdue and others.

The standout from San Antonio tallied 56 tackles and 10 pass breakups as a senior after registering 70 tackles, five interceptions and eight pass breakups during his junior campaign.

DEJON GOMES, a 6-0, 190-pound junior college cornerback out of San Francisco (Calif.) City College also joined the 2009 Husker class. A mid-year transfer, Gomes signed his letter of intent with Nebraska in mid-December and will begin January classes in Lincoln. He's expected to bring immediate depth to the Husker secondary.

"I think it was everything (about Nebraska) as a whole," Gomes said. "The players, the people welcomed me very well, of course, I liked the facilities and they have great resources for the academic side of things. That's very important to me."

"I loved the whole college football 'feel'

and how the fans are all fired up on game day. I was there for their game against Colorado. It was like nothing I've ever seen before in a college environment."

Gomes, who will have three years to play two once he arrives in Lincoln, earned first-team all-conference honors this past fall. Rated a three-star prospect by Rivals, Gomes registered 40 tackles, 14 pass breakups two fumble recoveries and four interceptions. He chose the Huskers over offers from Central Michigan, Kansas, Kansas State, Hawaii, Houston, San Jose State, UNLV and Utah.

"I'm going to go out and give it my all to be a part of the 'Blackshirt' defense,"



Gomes said. "I want to do whatever I can to help us get (Nebraska) back to where we were at in the 90's - battling for national championships."

The Huskers seem to be closing out their 2009 recruiting efforts in strong fashion. With a couple of spots likely still available in the class, they should sign a group of athletes in early February that will be considered among the nation's top 25. **N**

COMMITTED



TEXAS CORNER PICKS NU

It wasn't a laundry list of factors that led San Antonio, Texas cornerback Andrew Green to a decision that Nebraska was the place for him.

Green, the Madison High School defensive back, had plenty of options. Much of the Big 12 including Baylor, Colorado, Iowa State, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma State all sent him an offer. Nebraska just felt right.

"All the schools were great," Green said. "But, I don't know. I just felt like God was telling me I need to go to Nebraska. He put it in my heart. I didn't have that feeling at any other place."

The decision came quickly. In fact, the day his Missouri visit ended on Dec. 14, Green made the call to the Nebraska coaches before flying back to Texas.

The 6-0, 180-pounder certainly had plenty of people around him who had been through this exact process before. His brother Tony played at Alabama A&M and his other older brother Gary signed with Kansas out of high school.

This decision though was all about him and his family made sure he understood that.

"It was really 100 percent on me," he said. "Wherever my heart is, I'm going to follow. They supported me in whatever decision I made."

by John Talman, Recruiting Publisher
HuskersIllustrated.com

Recruiting Notebook

Filling out the class

by Sean Stevens

Nebraska's 2009 recruiting class is nearly wrapped up; however a couple of spots remain to be filled. Who will round out the class? Here are our best guesses to take those last spots.

Defensive tackle is a position that NU has long been trying to fill. Two prospects remain as possibilities, although the chances are beginning to dwindle.

LATU HEIMULI (6-3/296/4-stars) of Salt Lake City, Utah has been near the top of NU's wish list for awhile. Nebraska head coach **BO PELINI** showed how much the Huskers think of Heimuli by making his initial in-home visit as a head coach to Utah.

After an official visit to Florida in mid-December, Heimuli's high school coach Brody Benson said that he felt the Gators would be tough to beat.

"Latu basically told me that they have the best of everything he's seen. He was talking



about the facilities, the football players, the academic support, the weight room; he said it was the best that he's seen."

SIONE TUIHALAMAKA (6-2/275/3-stars) of Gardena, Calif., (pictured) has an official visit to Lincoln scheduled for Jan. 16, but if his recent comments hold water then he'll be staying out West.

"Yeah, that's most likely where I'll end up. I really like Cal and Arizona," he said. "I'll probably take two or three official visits and then probably decide with a couple weeks left in January."

SIDELINES

LOUISIANA HUSKER?

Defensive end **BENNIE LOGAN** (6-3/235/3-stars) of Coushatta, La. visited Nebraska for the Colorado game and came away impressed.

"Nebraska was a sellout game so (the stadium) was more packed than I've ever seen LSU. It was much louder than I expected it to be. Everybody was real friendly. The (Nebraska) coaches held up to their word. Whatever they told me going into that trip - they stuck to it."

It's been anticipated that if LSU offered a scholarship Logan would accept immediately, however that offer came and Logan is still open. He will visit Michigan, LSU, Southern Miss and Texas Tech before making a decision.

"I guess I'd say that LSU is maybe a little under the other four schools right now. They really aren't showing as much interest as the rest. They haven't been recruiting me as hard as coach J.P. (John Papuchis) of Nebraska or coach (Fred) Jackson of Michigan."

CALIFORNIA PROSPECT

Another possibility is outside linebacker **ERIC MARTIN** (6-2/216/3-stars) of Moreno Valley, Calif. Defensive coordinator Carl Pelini visited Martin in early December, and it seems the Huskers might have garnered an official visit.

"Hopefully, Nebraska will be my first one, and then Arizona, and maybe Washington. It's all about what I could do my first year there - if I'd have to red shirt or if I'd have a chance to play early," he said. "I had a real good conversation with coach Pelini about everything. He said he really likes me and he was telling me how much fun it would be if I went to Nebraska. He said I was the only linebacker from California they recruited."

2009 Nebraska Commitment List (22)

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Hometown (School)
Jason Ankrach	DE	6-4	248	Gaithersburg, MD (Quince Orchard)
Nick Ash	OL	6-5	261	Keller, Texas (Keller)
Shawn Bodtmann	OLB	6-0	205	Scranton, Pa. (West Scranton)
Rex Burkhead	RB	5-10	190	Plano, Texas (Plano)
DeAndre Byrd	CB	5-10	170	Tallahassee, Fla. (Lincoln)
Jess Coffey	OL	6-7	270	Denton, Texas (Guyer)
Andrew Green	DB	6-0	181	San Antonio, Texas (James Madison)
Cody Green	QB	6-4	220	Dayton, Texas (Dayton)
Dejon Gomes*	DB	6-0	190	San Francisco, Calif. (City College of SF)
J.T. Kerr	TE	6-4	230	Corona, Calif. (Scripps Ranch)
Brandon Kinnie	WR	6-3	215	Fort Scott, Kan. (Fort Scott CC)
Taylor Martinez	ATH	6-0	176	Corona, Calif. (Centennial)
Lazarri Middleton	DB	6-1	190	Long Beach, Calif. (Poly)
Cole Pensick	DL	6-2	250	Lincoln, Neb. (Northeast)
Brent Qvale	OL	6-7	300	Williston, N.D. (Williston)
Thaddeus Randle	DL	6-1	255	Galena Park, Texas (North Shore)
Dontrayevous Robinson	RB	6-1	215	Euless, Texas (Trinity)
Jeremia Sirls	OL	6-6	280	Lakewood, Colo. (Bear Creek)
Dijon Washington	S	6-0	173	Lawndale, Calif. (Leuzinger)
Chris Williams	LB	6-0	230	Abilene, Texas (Abilene)
Kevin Young	DE	6-4	227	Olathe, Kan. (North)
C.J. Zimmerer	FB	6-0	213	Omaha, Neb. (Omaha Gross)



**NEBRASKA 26
CLEMSON 21**

Bowl swings in two plays

For a few anxious moments in the Kona Minolta Gator Bowl, it appeared that Nebraska might have lost quarterback Joe Ganz – and possibly the game – in a span of two plays.

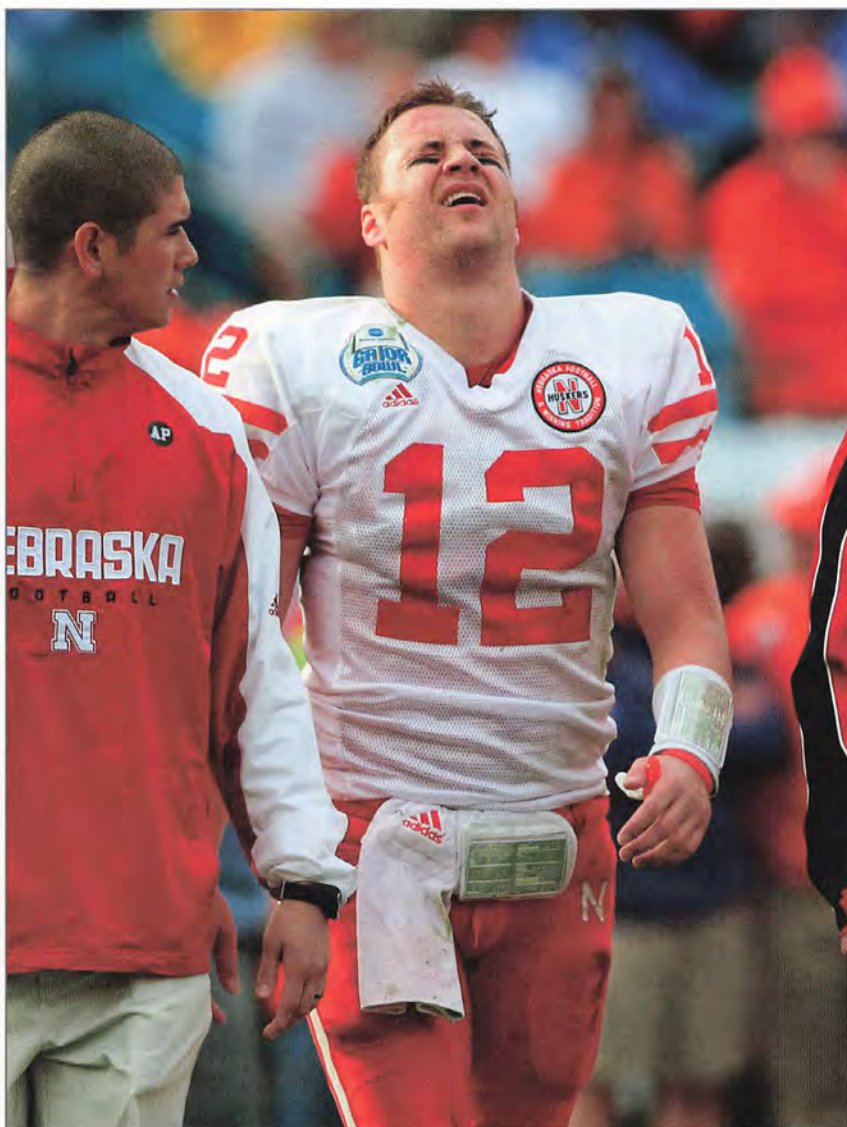
With the Cornhuskers clinging to a 23-21 lead with 12 minutes remaining, Ganz scrambled to his left to buy some extra time and tossed a short pass to I-back Marlon Lucky for a 4-yard gain. But after delivering the throw, Ganz was brought down from behind by a Clemson defender and crumpled to the turf.

Just as Big Red fans were letting out a collective sigh as Ganz was able to walk off the field, disaster almost struck again. On a third-and-7 play from the Nebraska 27-yard line, backup quarterback Patrick Witt dropped back to pass before deciding to tuck the ball and scramble.

Witt gained 4 yards, but appeared to fumble and the loose ball was carried into the end zone by Clemson cornerback Byron Maxwell. Fortunately for the Huskers, the replay official overturned the call on the field, ruling that Witt's knee was down before he fumbled.

Nebraska was then able to punt and wound up holding the Tigers scoreless on their final three possessions for a 26-21 victory. The significance of the replay reversal certainly wasn't lost on Clemson coach Dabo Swinney.

"(We) had some critical calls in the game – some of them went against us," Swinney



Joe Ganz walks off the field under supervision after suffering an injury in the fourth quarter.

PHOTO BY SCOTT BRUHN

said. "It's a game of inches."

Ganz didn't miss another offensive snap, helping the Huskers tack on a crucial field goal with 5:20 to play.

"I was a little fogged up in the head and I just needed a couple of plays off to kind of regain everything," Ganz said. "I didn't really know where I was when I got up, but

after a while, it kind of came back."

Nebraska receiver Todd Peterson never had a doubt that Ganz would return.

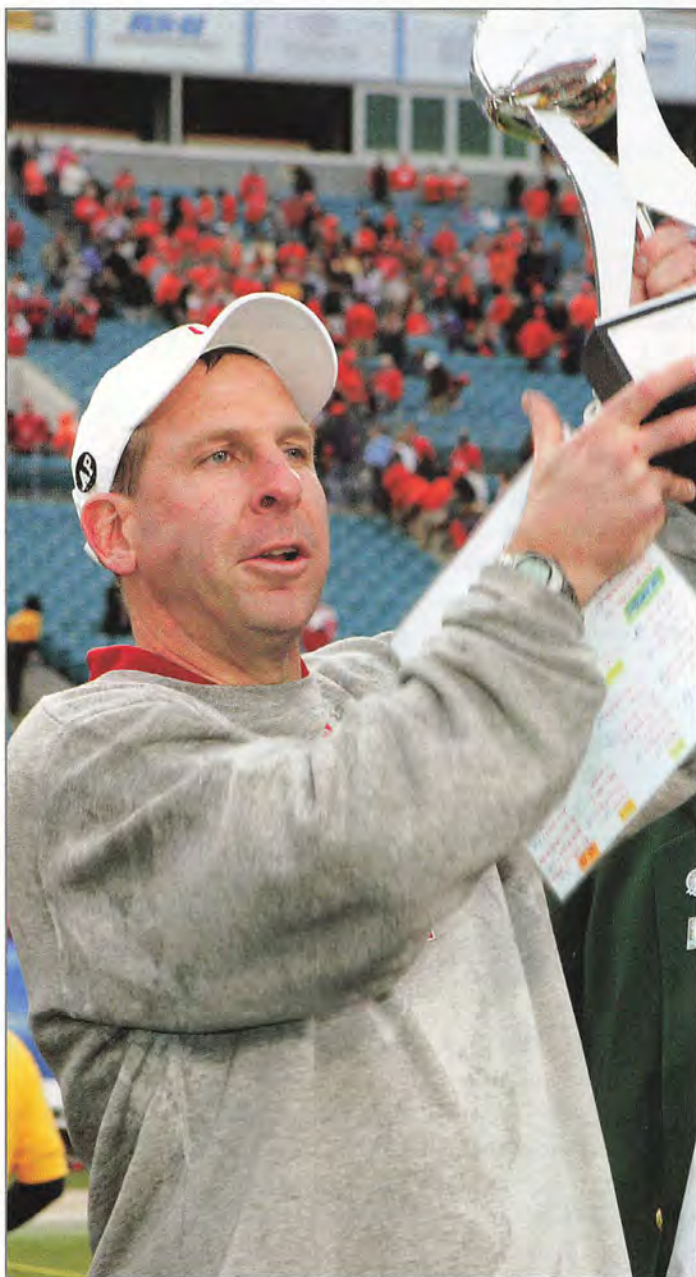
"Even when Joe was down on the turf, I knew he'd be back," Peterson said. "There was no way you're going to keep Joe Ganz outside the stripes for his last game." **N**

— by Terry Douglass

PHOTOS BY SCOTT BRUHN



Nebraska's blocked field goal was just one of many defensive highlights.



Head Coach Bo Pelini raises the Gator Bowl trophy after a 26-21 win.

REPORT CARD

RUSHING:

B+

With fellow I-backs **MARLON LUCKY** and **ROY HELU JR.** ailing, **QUENTIN CASTILLE** shined, rushing for a career-high 125 yards, including runs of 58 and 40 yards to set up scores. Huskers had good success with a running play the coaching staff added at halftime.

PASSING:

C

With Clemson showing new blitz looks, quarterback **JOE GANZ** struggled early, going 9-of-21 passing for 103 yards and an interception in the first half. However, the gutsy senior was able to make adjustments and wound up throwing for 236 yards and two TDs.

RUSHING DEFENSE:

A+

Never mind the fact that five sacks left Clemson with 4 yards net rushing. The real story was that the Blackshirts held Clemson's talented running back tandem of James Davis (12 carries for 26 yards) and C.J. Spiller (seven carries for 17 yards) in check.

PASSING DEFENSE:

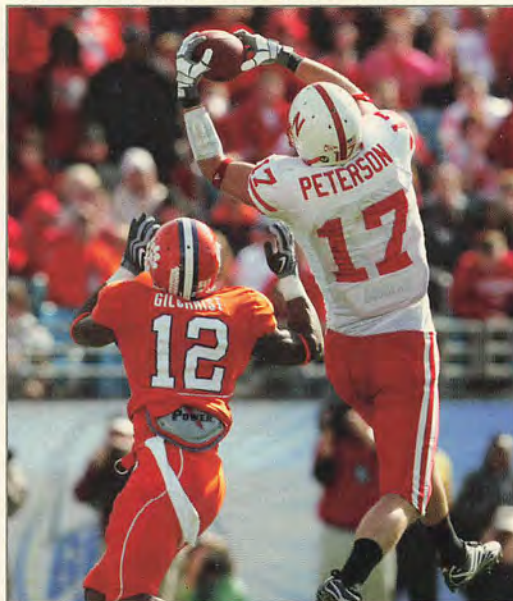
A

While the Tigers' only two offensive TDs came through the air, Nebraska produced five sacks – four by its dominant defensive line – and had two interceptions. Clemson quarterback Cullen Harper threw 20 incompletions in 37 attempts for 206 yards with a one-dimensional attack.

KICKING/SPECIAL TEAMS:

B-

Place-kicker **ALEX HENERY** capped his stellar season with a Gator Bowl-record four field goals. **RICKEY THENARSE**'s punt block and **NDAMUKONG SUH**'s field-goal block were big. Clemson had 178 yards combined in kickoff and punt returns – definitely two areas to improve in 2009.



Todd Peterson made several key catches to pace the Husker offense.

PHOTOS BY SCOTT BRUHN



MOTIVATION

Clemson's defense drew most of the attention prior to the game, and rightly so based on statistics. The Tigers ranked 10th in the nation in pass defense and scoring defense and 17th in total defense. But Nebraska's defense carried the day. "We talked about how the offense has bailed out the defense quite a few times this year, and in the past, and it was time for the defense to bail out the offense," said sophomore linebacker **BLAKE LAWRENCE**. "So when we were put in a hole or we were put at a disadvantage we kind of used that as motivation, saying, 'We can stop them. We can do it.'"

PRAISE THE LORD

Sophomore safety **ERIC HAGG** "messed up" on the fourth-down play on which Clemson completed a 16-yard pass for a first down with just over 2 minutes remaining.

"I was outside and I was supposed to be inside," he said.

But he made up for the mistake, twice,

on back-to-back plays, one down later. Hagg blitzed both times. On first-and-goal from the Nebraska 10-yard line, he deflected a pass. And then on second-and-10, he sacked Clemson quarterback Cullen Harper for a 16-yard loss.

"Throughout the whole game he (Harper) was getting me," said Hagg. "Like he would just throw it up before I'd get there. So that one (deflection) I just jumped way early, and the second one (sack), he probably thought I was going to jump again. He pump-faked and I just stayed on my feet.

"I don't know; God did that for me on that one because I would have jumped again."

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Junior safety **MATT O'HANLON** made a big play to help preserve the victory, breaking up what would have been a touchdown pass with less than 2 minutes remaining. On third-and-goal at the Nebraska 26-yard line, Clemson quarterback Cullen Harper passed to halfback C.J. Spiller.

In the coverage on that play, linebacker **TYLER WORTMAN** "was supposed to 'carry' the running back," O'Hanlon said. But Spiller has 4.2 speed in the 40-yard dash and "that's a hard job for any linebacker, so I just kind of leaned that way, and I was lucky enough to be in the right position.

"I just got a good break on the ball and came down on his arm when he caught the ball."

O'Hanlon, who had seen little action since the Kansas game, entered for **RICKEY THENARSE** late in the first quarter and played the remainder of the game. "I was really blessed to be out there," he said.

AL GETS HIS KICKS, AGAIN

Sophomore **ALEX HENERY** set a Gator Bowl record – and tied a Nebraska bowl record – by kicking four field goals, from 48, 28, 28 and 22 yards. He was four-of-four on field goal attempts for the third time this season. The other games were against Western Michigan and Colorado, when he



Q STEPS UP — Nebraska opened with two I-backs, sophomores **ROY HELU, JR.** and **QUENTIN CASTILLE**. But Helu, who was hampered by a knee infection, carried only five times — all in the first half and four in the first quarter — for a net of minus-1 yard. Castille shouldered the load with 18 carries for a career-high 125 yards, including a career-long 58-yard run in the third quarter. **MARLON LUCKY** was hampered by a turf toe, which kept him on the sideline for the Colorado game, and didn't get a carry against Clemson. He did catch four passes for 13 yards, however. "Q carried the load, and he did it well," coach **BO PELINI** said.

kicked a 57-yarder to give the Cornhuskers the lead with 1:43 remaining.

The day before, he and **ADI KUNALIC** had watched Oregon State defeat Pittsburgh 3-0 in the Sun Bowl game. "Me and Adi were joking on the sideline," said Henery. "Right at the end of the game we were like, 'What if it's like that?' It started off like it was going to be that way.

"I didn't think it would come down to that."

GOOD TIME

Coach **BO PELINI** described the Gator Bowl experience as "tremendous. I've been in a lot of great bowl games," he said. "I've been in the Orange Bowl, two national championship games, the Sugar Bowl; this has been the best experience I've ever had. It's been first-class all the way."

NO PANIC

Despite the 14-3 deficit, the Cornhuskers remained confident at halftime. "For me, definitely, the first half there was a little frustration, not wanting it to get away from us," senior wide receiver **NATE SWIFT** said. However, "I don't think during halftime there

was any panic."

The locker room was "pretty somber," coach **BO PELINI** said. "I probably threw a chair or two in private. I walk out and act like everything is OK. Before we walked out, I said, 'Hey, fellas, we've been here before, right?' And everybody said, 'Yep.' Really, it was pretty matter of fact."

COMEBACK KIDS

The Cornhuskers trailed 14-3 at halftime and 21-10 in the third quarter. The 11-point deficit tied the largest Nebraska has overcome in a bowl game. The Cornhuskers trailed Michigan 28-17 in the fourth quarter of the 2005 Alamo Bowl game against Michigan.

UP FRONT

Nebraska's defensive front was dominant, no surprise. "The defense relies on how strong our defensive line is, and this year those four guys have proved to be some of the best," said sophomore linebacker **BLAKE LAWRENCE**. "They just came out and controlled the tempo of the defense and made it known that the Blackshirts are working their way back, if they're not back already.

"They imposed their will on the Clemson offense."

QUICKLY



MVP

Senior quarterback **JOE GANZ** was named the game's MVP. "He's my leader, the MVP of that game, and he definitely deserved it more than anybody," said senior wide receiver **NATE SWIFT**.



BRIEFLY

The Cornhuskers wore black circular stickers with a white "AP" on the backs of their helmets in memory of the father of **BO** and **CARL PELINI, ANTHONY PELINI**, who died on Dec. 23 at age 85.

Nebraska, which made its first appearance in the Gator Bowl, is now 23-22 all-time in bowl games, including 1-1 against Clemson, which won the 1982 Orange Bowl 22-15.

Nebraska limited Clemson to 210 yards. The Cornhuskers' bowl record for fewest yards allowed is 174 against Michigan State in the 2003 Alamo Bowl — with **BO PELINI** as interim head coach.

GamePhotos

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE KONICA MINOLTA GATOR BOWL



TOP: Clemson players (l-r) Kyle Parker, Cullen Harper and Tyler Grisham join Huskers Clayton Sievers, Tyrone Fahie and Alonzo Whaley on a trip to visit sick children at a local hospital. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Husker players visited an area amusement park during the week's festivities. **MIDDLE RIGHT:** Coach Bo Pelini also took in some rides. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The Husker Marching Band made an appearance at the Gator Bowl Parade.

SNAP SHOT



PHOTOS BY SCOTT BRUHN



TOP: Junior safety Matt O'Hanlon breaks up what would have been a go-ahead touchdown pass with less than 2 minutes remaining. **MIDDLE:** Clayton Sievers chases down quarterback Cullen Harper. **BOTTOM:** Husker fans were well-represented at Jacksonville Municipal Stadium.



SUMMARY

SCORING

Jan. 1, 2009
Jacksonville Municipal Stadium • Jacksonville, Fla.
Attendance: 67,282

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Tot
Nebraska	0	3	20	3	26
Clemson	0	14	7	0	21

Second Quarter

CLEM	McDaniel TD Fumble Recovery (Buchholz Kick) 04:52	0	7
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NU	Henery 48-yard Field Goal 01:10 Drive: 11 plays 48 yds 3:36	3	7
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CLEM	Kelly Pass from Harper 25-yards (Buchholz Kick) 00:35 Drive: 2 plays 13 yds 0:19	3	14
------	---	---	----

Third Quarter

NU	Swift Pass from Ganz 17-yards (Henery Kick) 12:24 Drive: 5 plays 54 yds 2:27	10	14
----	---	----	----

CLEM	Ford Pass from Harper 41-yards (Buchholz Kick) 10:06 Drive: 1 plays 56 yds 0:16	10	21
------	--	----	----

NU	Peterson Pass from Ganz 19-yards (Henery Kick) 07:54 Drive: 4 plays 75 yds 2:04	17	21
----	--	----	----

NU	Henery 28-yard Field Goal 05:13 Drive: 4 plays -1 yds 1:37	20	21
----	---	----	----

NU	Henery 28-yard Field Goal 01:40 Drive: 5 plays 20 yds 2:02	23	21
----	---	----	----

Fourth Quarter

NU	Henery 22-yard Field Goal 05:20 Drive: 5 plays 49 yds 2:10	26	21
----	---	----	----

TEAM STATS

	NU	CLEM
Total First Downs	14	14
Rushing	3	2
Passing	11	7
Penalty	0	5
Rushing Attempts	35	26
Yards Gained Rushing	164	58
Yards Lost Rushing	39	54
Net Yards Rushing	125	4
Net Yards Passing	236	206
Passes Attempted	36	37
Passes Completed	19	17
Had Intercepted	1	2
Percent Completion	52.8%	45.9%
Yards per Attempt	6.6	5.6
Yards per Completion	12.4	12.1
Total Offensive Plays	71	63
Total Net Yards	361	210
Avg. Gain Per Play	5.1	3.3
Fumbles: No-Lost	3-2	1-0
Penalties: No-Yards	8-81	7-50
Punts: No-Yards	7-270	9-333
Avg. Per Punt	38.6	37.0
Avg. Net Punt	27.0	33.3
Punt Returns: No-Yards	6-33	6-81
Kickoff Returns: No-Yards	4-89	4-97
Interception Returns: No-Yards	2-0	1-63
Fumble Returns: No-Yards	0-0	1-28
Miscellaneous Yards	0	0
Possession Time	34:11	25:49
Third-Down Conversions	7-19	3-16
Percentage	36.8%	18.8%
Fourth-Down Conversions	0-0	1-3
Percentage	0.0%	33.3%
Sacks By: No-Yards	5-44	0-0

OFFENSIVE INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

NEBRASKA

Rushing	No	Gain	Lost	Net	Avg	TD	Lg
Castille	18	140	15	125	6.9	0	58
Witt	1	4	0	4	4.0	0	4
Ganz	7	15	14	1	0.1	0	5
Helu Jr.	5	5	6	-1	-0.2	0	4
TEAM	4	0	4	-4	-1.0	0	0
Total	35	164	39	125	3.6	0	58

Passing	Att	Comp	%	Int	Yds	TD	Lg
Ganz	36	19	52.8	1	236	2	36
Total	36	19	52.8	1	236	2	36

Receiving	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Peterson	4	96	1	36
Holt	2	35	0	23
Swift	3	32	1	17
McNeill	3	27	0	15
Castille	1	20	0	20
Lucky	4	13	0	8
Paul	2	13	0	10
Total	19	236	2	36

Punt Ret	No	Avg	Lg	Blk	TB	FC	50+	In 20
Swift	5	30	0	12				
Paul	1	3	0	0				
Total	6	33	0	12				

Kick Ret	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Paul	3	58	0	25
Dennard	1	31	0	31
Total	4	89	0	31

Punting	No	Avg	Lg	Blk	TB	FC	50+	In 20
Titchener	7	38.6	46	0	0	0	0	2
Total	7	38.6	46	0	0	0	0	2

Field Goals	Made	Att	Lg	Blkd
Henery	4	4	48	0
Total	4	4	48	0

Interception Ret	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Lawrence	1	0	0	0
West	1	0	0	0
Total	2	0	0	0

CLEMSON

Rushing	No	Gain	Lost	Net	Avg	TD	Lg
Davis	12	36	10	26	2.2	0	12
Spiller	7	17	0	17	2.4	0	10
Ford	1	3	0	3	3.0	0	3
Harper	6	2	44	-42	-7.0	0	2
Total	26	58	54	4	0.2	0	12

Passing	Att	Comp	%	Int	Yds	TD	Lg
Harper	37	17	45.9	2	206	2	46
Total	37	17	45.9	2	206	2	46

Receiving	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Ford	5	112	1	46
Kelly	6	74	1	25
Faerber	1	8	0	8
Grisham	1	6	0	6
Spiller	1	6	0	9
Total	17	206	2	46

Punting	No	Avg	Lg	Blk	TB	FC	50+	In 20
Rojas	7	36.4	48	0	0	0	0	1

Punt Ret	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Spiller	4	62	0	33
Ford	2	19	0	20
Total	6	81	0	33

Kick Ret	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Spiller	4	97	0	33
Total	4	97	0	33

Punting	No	Avg	Lg	Blk	TB	FC	50+	In 20
Maners	8	40.8	50	1	1	0	1	3
TEAM	1	7.0	7	0	0	0	0	0
Total	9	37.0	50	1	1	0	1	3

Field Goals	Made	Att	Lg	Blkd
Buchholz	0	1	0	1
Total	0	1	0	1

FAN OF THE GAME



A unidentified Husker fan joined the Husker masses that flocked to Jacksonville for Nebraska's first trip to the Gator Bowl.

NEBRASKA FINAL SEASON STATS

2008 NEBRASKA FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Sat., Aug. 30	Western Michigan	Memorial Stadium	W, 47-24
Sat., Sept. 6	San Jose State	Memorial Stadium	W, 35-12
Sat., Sept. 13	New Mexico State	Memorial Stadium	W, 38-7
Sat., Sept. 27	Virginia Tech	Memorial Stadium	L, 30-35
Sat., Oct. 4	#4/3 Missouri	Memorial Stadium	L, 17-52
Sat., Oct. 11	#7 Texas Tech	at Lubbock, Texas	L, 31-37 (OT)
Sat., Oct. 18	Iowa State	at Ames, Iowa	W, 35-7
Sat., Oct. 25	Baylor	Memorial Stadium	W, 32-20
Sat., Nov. 1	Oklahoma	at Norman, Okla.	L, 28-62
Sat., Nov. 8	Kansas	Memorial Stadium	W, 45-35
Sat., Nov. 15	Kansas State	at Manhattan, Kan.	W, 56-28
Fri., Nov. 28	Colorado	Memorial Stadium	W, 40-31
Thur., Jan. 1	vs. Clemson	at Jacksonville, Fla. (Gator Bowl)	W, 26-21

SCORING BY QUARTERS:

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT	Total
NU	98	126	81	155	0	460
Opp	113	107	93	52	6	371

	NU	OPP
Total First Downs	295	228
Rushing	113	83
Passing	171	117
Penalty	11	28
Total Net Yards	5860	4548
Total Plays	919	803
Yards Per Play	6.4	5.7
Yards Per Game	450.8	349.8
Rushing Attempts-Yards	486-2207	418-1514
Yards Per Attempt	4.5	3.6
Yards Per Game	169.8	116.5
Pass Att.-Comp.-Int.	433-295-11	385-222-12
Passing Yards	3653	3034
Yards Per Completion	12.4	13.7
Yards Per Game	281.0	233.4
Punting: No.-Avg.	48-38.5	66-38.5
Fumbles-Lost	31-17	17-5
Penalties-Yards	94-800	64-477
Sacks By-Yds. Lost	35-269	21-128
Third-Down Conversions	84-178	57-169
Conversion Pct.	47.2	33.7
Fourth-Down Conversions	5-13	10-21
Conversion Pct.	38.5	47.6
Avg. Time Of Possession	34:01	25:59

Rushing	G	No	Gain	Lost	Net	Avg	TD	Lg	Yd/G
Helu Jr., Roy	13	125	839	36	803	6.4	7	57	61.8
Lucky, Marlon	12	125	550	33	517	4.1	7	58	43.1
Castille, Q.	13	106	505	38	467	4.4	6	58	35.9
Ganz, Joe	13	92	417	159	258	2.8	5	33	19.8
Mendoza, Marcus	4	15	110	7	103	6.9	1	35	25.8
Swift, Nate	13	2	23	0	23	11.5	0	16	1.8
Witt, Patrick	5	4	21	1	20	5.0	1	16	4.0
Peterson, Todd	13	2	18	0	18	9.0	0	16	1.4
Lee, Zac	2	2	17	0	17	8.5	0	11	8.5
Henery, Alex	13	1	9	0	9	9.0	0	9	0.7
McNeill, Mike	13	1	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Paul, Niles	13	1	0	6	-6	-6.0	0	0	-0.5
Wesch, Jake	13	1	0	9	-9	-9.0	0	0	-0.7
TEAM	5	9	0	13	-13	-1.4	0	0	-2.6
Total	13	486	2509	302	2207	4.5	27	58	169.8
Opponent	13	418	1895	381	1514	3.6	24	67	116.5

Passing	G	Att	Comp	%	Int	Yds	TD	Lg	Yd/G
Ganz, Joe	13	420	285	67.9	11	3568	25	69	274.5
Witt, Patrick	5	8	6	75.0	0	48	0	23	9.6
Lucky, Marlon	12	2	2	100.0	0	24	2	20	2.0
Wesch, Jake	13	1	1	100.0	0	8	0	8	0.6
Lee, Zac	2	2	1	50.0	0	5	0	5	2.5
Total	13	433	295	68.1	11	3653	27	69	281.0
Opponent	13	385	222	57.7	12	3034	19	68	233.4

Receiving	G	No	Yds	Avg	TD	Lg	Yd/G
Swift, Nate	13	63	941	14.9	10	67	72.4
Peterson, Todd	13	62	786	12.7	4	36	60.5
McNeill, Mike	13	32	442	13.8	6	53	34.0
Holt, Menelik	12	30	355	11.8	1	25	29.6
Lucky, Marlon	12	26	288	11.1	1	69	24.0
Helu Jr., Roy	13	25	266	10.6	0	27	20.5
Paul, Niles	13	23	214	9.3	0	21	16.5
Young, Dreu	13	9	140	15.6	1	55	10.8
Castille, Q.	13	9	109	12.1	0	31	8.4
Brooks, Chris	11	2	27	13.5	1	25	2.5
Teafatiller, H.	12	3	27	9.0	0	15	2.2
Ganz, Joe	13	1	20	20.0	1	20	1.5
Gilleylen, C.	11	2	11	5.5	0	6	1.0
Hill, Ryan	13	3	9	3.0	1	6	0.7
Mendoza, Marcus	4	2	7	3.5	0	7	1.8
Cammack, Wes	13	1	5	5.0	0	5	0.4
Lawson, Thomas	11	1	4	4.0	0	4	0.4
Suh, Ndamukong	13	1	2	2.0	1	2	0.2
Total	13	295	3653	12.4	27	69	281.0
Opponent	13	222	3034	13.7	19	68	233.4

Defense	G	Tack	Ast	Tot	TFL	Sack	PD	FF	FR
Suh, Ndamukong	13	39	37	76	13-85	7-67	3	1	0
Asante, Larry	13	45	22	67	1-4	1-4	4	0	0
Allen, Pierre	13	21	31	52	7-37	5-27	1	1	0
O'Hanlon, Matt	13	33	19	52	2-5	0-0	5	0	0
Glenn, Cody	9	26	25	51	4-20	0-0	4	1	0
Steinkuhler, Ty	13	21	27	48	4-27	2-21	0	1	0
Potter, Zach	13	14	33	47	8-54	4-44	7	1	0
Murillo, A.	13	35	9	44	1-1	0-0	9	0	1
Hagg, Eric	13	29	10	39	4-28	1-16	7	1	1
Dillard, P.	9	13	25	38	1-9	0-6	1	0	0
Wortman, Tyler	13	19	17	36	5-11	0-0	1	0	0
Amukamara, P.	13	21	13	34	2-12	1-11	3	2	0
West, Anthony	12	23	6	29	1-2	1-2	9	0	0
Thenarse, R.	11	17	7	24	4-25	2-21	1	1	0
Thorell, Lance	11	15	9	24	0-0	0-0	1	0	0
Lawrence, Blake	10	8	13	21	0-0	0-0	1	0	0
Koehler, Colton	7	7	9	16	1-2	0-0	0	0	0
Holt, Matt	9	11	3	14	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Sievers, C.	13	9	5	14	2-6	1-1	0	1	0
Barfield, S.	11	7	3	10	3-16	3-16	0	0	0
Culbert, Major	7	4	6	10	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Cammack, Wes	13	8	1	9	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Moore, Terrence	7	3	5	8	2-11	2-11	0	0	0
Paul, Niles	13	5	3	8	0-0	0-0	0	0	2
May, Mathew	8	5	1	6	1-8	1-8	0	1	1
Wald, Mason	13	4	2	6	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Dennard, Alfonzo	12	4	1	5	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Teafatiller, H.	12	4	1	5	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Castille, Q.	13	1	2	3	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Hays, Mike	13	2	1	3	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Peterson, Todd	13	3	0	3	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Turner, Barry	2	1	2	3	1-15	1-14	0	0	0
Crick, Jared	9	1	1	2	0-0	0-0	1	0	0
Grove, Thomas	13	1	1	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Hill, Ryan	13	2	0	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0

Int Ret	G	No	Yds	Avg	TD	Lg	Yd/G
Suh, Ndamukong	13	2	79	39.5	2	49	6.1
West, Anthony	12	2	26	13.0	0	26	2.2
Potter, Zach	13	2	11	5.5	0	11	0.8
Murillo, A.	13	1	57	57.0	0	57	4.4
O'Hanlon, Matt	13	1	21	21.0	0	21	1.6
Wortman, Tyler	13	1	8	8.0	0	8	0.6
Asante, Larry	13	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Lawrence, Blake	10	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Thenarse, R.	11	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Total	13	12	202	16.8	2	57	15.5
Opponent	13	11	249	22.6	3	63	19.2

Brotherly Love



BY BRIAN ROSENTHAL

Tanisha Jenkins would be proud of the season Pierre Allen has played for Nebraska's football team.

Allen, who had a breakthrough sophomore year playing on the Huskers' defensive line, is certain of it.

Jenkins, his older sister, always asked Allen about football. She always talked about football. She wanted her younger brother to play and enjoy the sport he loved. That's why Allen, when faced with a difficult decision the week before Nebraska's game at Iowa State in mid-October, knew in his heart what to do.

Jenkins had died earlier that week after a lifelong battle with epilepsy. She was 23. Allen, the starting right defensive end, missed two days of practice while returning to his hometown of Denver for his sister's funeral.

He could miss the game and mourn the loss of his sister.

But that's not what Tanisha would've wanted.





"IT was very tough (coming back and playing). But then I just thought to myself, " 'This is what she would want me to do.' She was always talking to me about it and asking me about football. I guess what pushed me to come back out here and fight was her, you know what I mean?"

So Allen played against Iowa State. He forced a fumble that resulted in Nebraska's first turnover in more than three games. Allen knocked the ball loose from a Cyclone receiver, and teammate Armando Murillo recovered along the sideline.

"I was actually in a certain coverage technique when I was out in a coverage responsibility," Allen said. "I was kind of late going to my coverage, because I kind of got the wrong read. I knew I had to do something to make up. I just went for the strip attempt and it came out successful. I knew I was attempting to punch it out, but I didn't know I actually did until I got up and everybody was congratulating me. I didn't know I really got it."

Allen also had two tackles in the Huskers' most dominant defensive

performance of the season, a 35-7 victory.

All the while, Allen kept his sister in his memory. He always will.

"Rest in peace. I lost her. She's in heaven now," Allen said. "I liked everything about her. She always spoke her mind, she was always there for me. She was my older sister, but I was always there for her."

Family is important to Allen. Moments after Nebraska had become bowl-eligible by defeating Kansas in Memorial Stadium on a cold November day, a small child bundled head to toe in winter Husker gear came on the field and jumped into the arms of Allen. He smiled.

The child was Pierre Allen, Jr. He was born Aug. 28, 2006, the week before Allen's first game his freshman season (a season in which he redshirted). Coaches allowed Allen to quickly fly home during fall camp that year so he could be there for his son's birth. He missed it by some 20 minutes.

When Allen was talking about his sister, he remembered her coming to Lincoln in August for his son's second birthday party. She also attended the Western Michigan game.

Allen and his wife, Mercedes, raise

Pierre, Jr., together in Lincoln.

"He's just fun to be around," Allen said. "He loves me. He's always hollering, 'Dadda! Dadda! Dadda!' He always wants to be around me. He's taught me a lot of things, how to be a father, how to be a great person. I just love him."

Such lessons might come in handy for Allen, who's majoring in child, youth and family studies. He was named to the Big 12 Spring Honor Roll, and he's volunteered his time on team hospital visits and at the F Street Recreation Center.

"Being a father, you have to be patient, let things come to you," Allen said. "I just try to teach him what my mother and my grandmother and all my aunts taught me. Everybody knows how kids are. They can get on your nerves sometimes, but he's my son, and he teaches me to be patient."

Allen used to have "Allen Sr." on the back of his jersey, as did Chris Brooks, who has a son bearing his first name, too. First-year coach Bo Pelini had the extra letters removed this season. Allen's not sure why, but he's not concerned.

"I don't ask questions," he said, smiling. Instead, Allen focused his energy on

becoming a key cog on arguably the biggest strength of Nebraska's team this season: the defensive line.

Allen, who entered the season as a top backup to senior Barry Turner, had one tackle in Nebraska's season-opening victory over Western Michigan. Turner, though, suffered a season-ending leg injury in the first quarter of the Huskers' second game against San Jose State.

Enter Allen, who responded with a career-high 10 tackles, including three for loss, in Nebraska's 35-12 victory. Before that game, Allen had recorded 17 career tackles.

"Pierre got a lot of snaps last year behind me," senior defensive end Zach Potter said, "so it's not like he was really lacking game experience. I think he stepped in really well."

Potter joked how Allen said the week before the San Jose State game that he'd "jump on every pile he could think of" in an effort to accumulate more tackles, since he had only one the first game.

"I guess that's how he got to 10 tackles," Potter quipped.

Nebraska defensive coordinator Carl Pelini, who also coaches the defensive line, said it became clearly evident in spring ball that Allen was the team's No. 3 defensive end, and that he had no doubts about the sophomore stepping in to replace Turner.

"Nothing I haven't seen before," Carl Pelini said. "He's a good football player, he's hard-nosed, he's a physical player, and he plays hard. He understands the defense and he prepared every week as if he was the starter. When his time came, he was able to perform."

The emergence and steady play of Allen helped Nebraska's defensive line to a huge turnaround from the previous season. The Huskers' front four been responsible for 23½ of Nebraska's 30 sacks this season. The entire defense had only 13 in 2007.

"Being a father, you have to be patient, let things come to you. I just try to teach him what my mother and my grandmother and all my aunties taught me."

PIERRE ALLEN

Allen played in all 12 regular-season games this season, with 10 starts, and entered the Gator Bowl game against Clemson with 50 total tackles, including 20 solo tackles. Nine of those were for loss, including four sacks for 26 yards lost. His



average of 4.2 tackles per game ranks third among Big 12 defensive linemen, trailing only teammate Ndamukong Suh and Eric Childs of Kansas State.

Allen said he shouldered a big responsibility in replacing Turner, which meant spending extra time in the film room and working harder in practice. He said Turner, who could return for another season, has been "like a big brother," and that he respects how hard Turner works. He's the first player Allen seeks for advice.

"He'll come down hard on you," Allen said. "When you're doing something

wrong, he'll let you know. That's what you've got to respect about him."

Allen also has a great respect for the new coaching staff. He said the Pelinis, along with assistant coach John Papuchis, have taught him more about the ins and outs of his position.

"I'm understanding now, this year, 'Why am I doing this?' I'm understanding what other players are doing around me," Allen said. "It seemed like before they got here, I just knew my role, I just knew what to do. I knew what gap to go to. Now I know why I'm going to this gap, what to do if I see this slot, what to do if I see that slot."

The very athletic Allen, who's 6-foot-5, 265 pounds, is also an accomplished basketball player. He led Thomas Jefferson High School to a pair of Class 4A state championships, and earned MVP honors

in the state tournament his junior and senior seasons. As a senior, he averaged more than 20 points and led 4A in rebounding with 14.3 per game.

In fact, Nebraska basketball coach Doc Sadler received tapes of Allen's performances.

"I tell him I'm coming out (to play basketball), but I never do," Allen said with a smile. "He always gets mad and calls me a liar, all in good nature. I don't get a chance to talk to him a lot, but I just like him. He's a

cool dude. I just like his coaching style, too. I just sit up in the stands and watch him. A fiery dude. I like coaches like that."

Allen, though, said he hasn't touched a basketball in the two years he's been in Lincoln. He gained 40 pounds of muscle during his redshirt season. When he returned home the following summer, he was shooting around and tried to dunk. He discovered he was too heavy.

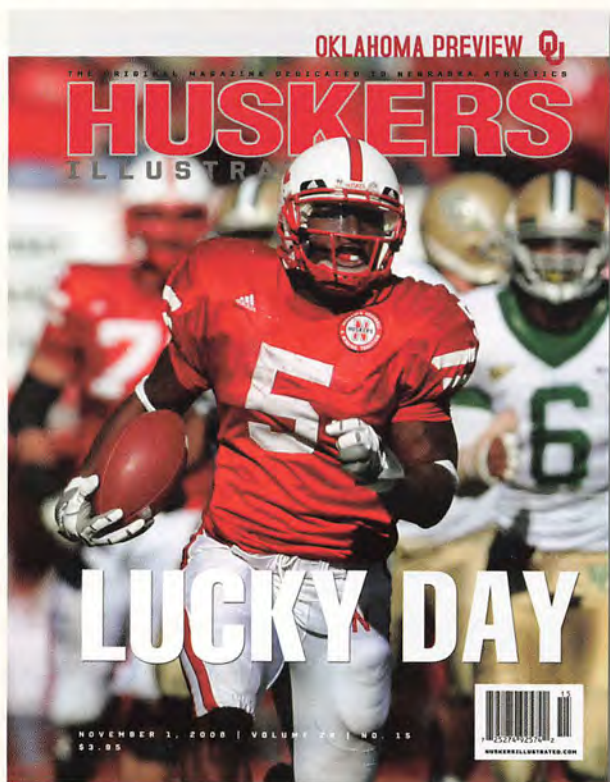
"I still love the game," Allen said, noting he'd probably go back to playing basketball for fun when he's done with football.

"Years from now," he said. **N**

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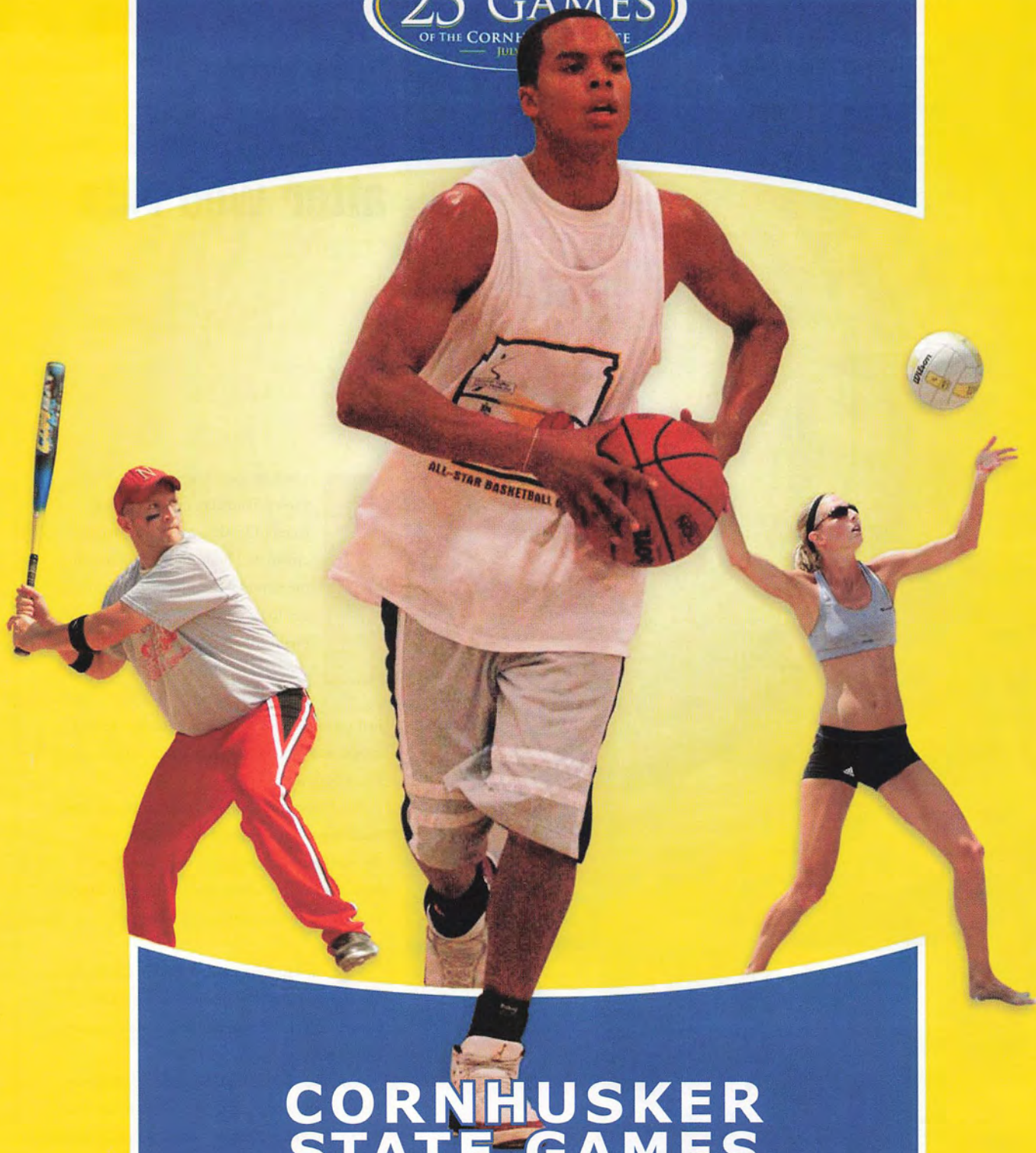
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Volleyball

RACHEL SCHWARTZ

BY BOB HAMAR

Season ends after wild ride

It was an incredible scene on a cold, snowy Thursday night at Qwest Center Omaha. An NCAA record crowd of 17,430 showed up to watch the national semifinals, and it turned out to be maybe the biggest night in the history of NCAA volleyball.

Stanford's thrilling rally from a 2-0 deficit against Texas to a 3-2 victory just set the stage for what most of that record crowd was there to see: No. 1 Penn State against No. 4 Nebraska.

No doubt those fans who braved the weather conditions that night will never regret it. No, the Huskers didn't win, but they came back from a 2-0 deficit and pushed eventual national champions to the limit before falling 15-11 in the fifth set.

Sure, the Huskers wanted to win. On the other hand, they knew they maxed out their ability, both during the season and in the match against Penn State.

"Another thing I told the team is I think next week, nobody is going to remember if we won or lost this match," Nebraska coach John Cook said after the match. "All they're going to remember is these three seniors and this team wore the Nebraska volleyball uniform. That's what they're going to remember."

Those three seniors – Jordan Larson, Amanda Gates and Rachel Schwartz – were the back bone for an overachieving team that surprised





everyone from the very beginning of the season. Despite losing four All-Americans from the 2007 team, the Huskers opened this season with wins over top-five opponents Stanford and Southern California.

And it didn't stop there. Nebraska just kept right on rolling all the way to Boulder, Colo. That's where their winning streak came to a crashing halt in a surprising 3-1 loss to a Colorado team that would finish the season with a 7-12 record in Big 12 play.

That loss led to a camouflage jacket that became a symbol for the Huskers to remind the players of how hard they had to play to be successful.

"After we lost at Colorado, we decided that we had to fight a lot harder when teams came at us and that was really our first punch in the gut," Cook said. "So the next day at practice, to use as a metaphor, we brought in the camo. It was in every practice and actually traveled with us for the rest of the year."

That loss was just a hiccup for the Huskers. They later survived a five-set victory at Texas A&M before a loss at Texas helped the Longhorns tie the Huskers for the

Big 12 Conference title.

The Huskers received the fourth overall seed in the NCAA Tournament and were placed in the Seattle Regional. That meant they had to beat No. 5 Washington in a regional final on the Huskies home court to make it back to Omaha for the final four.

It wasn't easy. The Huskers dropped the first two sets before winning the next two. Then they trailed 9-3 in the fifth before rebounding for an amazing 15-13 win.

The success of the 31-3 Huskers all went back to the team concept. Stanford and Texas, both with three first-team All-Americans on their roster, were more talented than Nebraska but the Huskers still defeated both of those final four teams during the regular season.

"We have a saying in coaching, when the sum of a team is better than its parts, that is the greatest joy, in my opinion," Cook said. "That is what I talk about in coaching clinics and to young coaches. If you can get a team to do that, it is a true measure of a great coaching job and this team did it."

Although the Huskers fell short of a

national championship, they did accomplish one of their main goals for this season. The seniors wanted to end their careers at the Qwest Center, right where they began back in 2005.

"The three seniors started here in Omaha," Gates said. "I know at our media day press conference we said our goal was to get back to Omaha and end our career here. I think that's really special."

LARSON ALL-AMERICAN

John Cook says Jordan Larson didn't really believe him midway through the season when he told her she was the best player to ever play at Nebraska.

"She looked at me like, 'You're crazy,'" Cook said. "Now she understands. No player at Nebraska has been at her level, has had a team like she's had around her and had to deal with as much as she's had to."

Larson became a first-team All-American this year for the second time in her career. She was also a first-teamer in 2006.

Penn State coach Russ Rose certainly appreciated Larson's play.

"I've seen her play on the teams where



she might have been the last option through the years to where she might be the first option, but I've always felt she plays the game the way coaches like to see the game played," Rose said.

NO INTERFERENCE

The feeling around the Nebraska program was better after the Penn State loss this year than it was a year ago when the Huskers fell to California in the regional finals. The 2008 team maxed out its ability. The 2007 team didn't.

"We had a lot of interference," Cook said of that team. "Some of it was expectations. Some of it was stuff outside of the team that had nothing to do with volleyball. That's the life of a team and that's why it's so hard to get to final fours and so hard to win championships because so many things have to go right."

2008 VS. 2006

Cook may have enjoyed the final four experience this year even more than he did in 2006 when the Huskers won the national

championship.

In fact, Cook said he enjoyed coaching the match against Penn State more than any he's ever been in.

"The first time we were here in 2006, there was a lot of pressure and expectations for us to get here," Cook said. "It was almost a relief that we got here, and I didn't enjoy the whole week because we were so uptight, so stressed out."

BACK TO OMAHA?

The 2009 final four will be in Tampa. The 2011 is already set for San Antonio, but the 2010 final four is yet to be awarded.

The city of Omaha would like to see the final four return in 2010. Stanford coach John Dunning said the NCAA committee will make the right decision.

"I think Omaha is a great site," he said. "This facility is ridiculous it is so perfect. The city, the support of the state, Nebraska volleyball helping out, everything. There are 10 amazing people that dedicate themselves to our sport, the volleyball committee. It is in their hands to decide

what is supposed to happen in the future for the sake of volleyball."

Penn State coach Russ Rose said the final four shouldn't be in Omaha permanently because it would be such a huge recruiting advantage for Nebraska.

FALLING IN LOVE

The 17,430 fans who packed the Qwest Center for Penn State's semifinal win over Nebraska surely enjoyed the experience. So did John Cook.

Cook said it was the most fun he'd ever had coaching a volleyball match.

"You just can't help but fall in love with this team," Cook said. "The whole night, realizing we were in front of a huge crowd, we're playing maybe the greatest team ever ... A team that hadn't lost a set and we're just battling every point. I tell them to have fun and enjoy it, soak in every minute and it was just so much fun. Penn State is such a great team and they force you to play at such a high level, and I saw our team rise to that challenge tonight." **N**



2008 VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE (31-3, 18-2 BIG 12)

Aug. 29-31	Runza/AVCA Showcase
Aug. 29	*Stanford, W, 3-0
Aug. 31	*USC, W, 3-1
Sept. 1	Oral Roberts, W 3-0
Sept. 5-6	Cal Poly Invite
Sept. 5	Tulane, W, 3-0
Sept. 6	Cal Poly, W, 3-0
Sept. 12-13	Ameritas Players Challenge
Sept. 12	LSU, W, 3-0
Sept. 13	New Mexico, W, 3-0
Sept. 17	at Kansas State, W, 3-1
Sept. 20	Texas, W, 3-1
Sept. 24	Kansas, W, 3-1
Sept. 27	at Iowa State, W, 3-1
Oct. 1	at Texas Tech, W, 3-0
Oct. 4	Colorado, W, 3-0
Oct. 5	*Creighton, W, 3-0
Oct. 8	Oklahoma, W, 3-0
Oct. 12	at Missouri, W, 3-0
Oct. 15	Baylor, W, 3-0
Oct. 22	Texas A&M, W, 3-0
Oct. 25	at Oklahoma, W, 3-0
Oct. 29	at Colorado, L, 1-3
Nov. 1	Iowa State, W, 3-1
Nov. 5	at Texas A&M, W, 3-2
Nov. 8	Kansas State, W, 3-0
Nov. 12	Missouri, W, 3-0
Nov. 15	at Kansas, W, 3-0
Nov. 19	at Texas, L, 1-3
Nov. 22	Texas Tech, W, 3-0
Nov. 29	at Baylor, W, 3-1
Dec. 5	Liberty, W, 3-1
Dec. 6	UAB, W, 3-0
Dec. 12	vs. Michigan, W, 3-0
Dec. 13	at Seattle, W, 3-2
Dec. 18	*vs. Penn State, L, 2-3
	* at Quest Center, Omaha

2008 ALL-BIG 12 VOLLEYBALL AWARDS

Player of the Year: Jordan Larson, Nebraska, Sr.
Newcomer of the Year: Sydney Anderson, Nebraska, So.

Freshman of the Year: Michelle Kocher, Texas,
Defensive Player of the Year: Jordan Larson, Nebraska, Sr.

Libero of the Year: Ashley Mass, Iowa State, So.
Coach of the Year: John Cook, Nebraska

ALL-BIG 12 FIRST TEAM

Taylor Barnes, Baylor, S, Jr.; Anna Breyfogle, Baylor, MB, Jr.; Victoria Henson, Iowa State, OH, So.; Kaylee Manns, Iowa State, S, Jr.; Rita Liliom, Kansas State, OH, Sr.; Nataly Korobkova, Kansas State, OH, Sr.; **SYDNEY ANDERSON**, Nebraska, S, So.; **KORI COOPER**, Nebraska, MB, Jr.; **JORDAN LARSON**, Nebraska, OH, Sr.; **TARA MUELLER**, Nebraska, OH, So.; Ashley Engle, Texas, OPP, Jr.; Juliann Faucette, Texas, OH, So.; Destinee Hooker, Texas, OH, Jr.; Lauren Paolini, Texas, MB, Sr.

ALL-BIG 12 HONORABLE MENTION

Jen Malcom, Iowa State, MB, Sr.; Ashley Mass, Iowa State, L, So.; Megan Farr, Kansas State, MB, Sr.; **AMANDA GATES**, Nebraska, MB, Sr.; Sarah Ammerman, Texas A&M, OH, Jr.; Mary Batis, Texas A&M, OH, Jr.



STEPPING IN

BY BOB HAMAR

WHEN KORI COOPER went down with a season-ending knee injury on Nov. 19, Jordan Wilberger was ready.

Sure, she was just a redshirt freshman – a walk-on to boot – who had only seen limited action this season. But Wilberger had no doubt she could step in and do the job for Cooper, an All-Big 12 first-team selection.

“It was really hard to see Cooper go down, but I knew my team needed me to step in, so that’s what I’m focusing on,” Wilberger said. “It’s going pretty well. You have to get used to different speeds in the game, but we’re going hard in practice, so it doesn’t feel any different.”

Wilberger is just that much more confident this season than she was a year ago.

“I think my mental awareness on the court has improved,” Wilberger said. “I’m just mentally ready for different things. I just think I’m quicker. The game has slowed down for me, you could say. Before my mind was racing and I couldn’t focus on one thing. Now it’s slowed down a little bit and I can kind of catch up to it.”

Coach John Cook is confident in Wilberger’s ability as well. She took over the M2 position that Amanda Gates had been playing with Gates moving to Cooper’s spot at M1.

“Jordan is probably more athletic than Kori and Amanda, but she just doesn’t have the experience,” Cook said. “But Jordan has been around.”

Wilberger was a three-sport standout at Scottsbluff High School. She thought about being a track athlete or playing basketball in college until she decided as a sophomore to concentrate on volleyball. Cook said

Wilberger’s athletic ability stand out on the volleyball court.

“She was a multi-sport athlete and did basketball and track,” Cook said. “But her high school volleyball and her club situation was very, very low level. She got recruited by a lot of Big 12 schools but she wanted to come to Nebraska and she was at the time a great walk on for us. We could see the potential there. I was saying early in the year that I thought she would be one of our most improved players.”

Cooper and Gates are more polished players than Wilberger at this point, but she can still do things on the court that her older teammates can’t.

“She’s just an athlete,” Cook said. “She plays higher than Cooper and Gates. She jumps higher. She just doesn’t have that experience, but she can make athletic plays. She’ll match up better against Texas-type hitters than Gates and Cooper. She just plays higher.”

That kind of athletic ability is what led Cook to invite Wilberger to walk on. Wilberger looked at Creighton, Colorado State, Tulsa, Oral Roberts and Kansas State before deciding to walk on at Nebraska.

“After my visit to Nebraska, I just knew that I wanted to be a part of the team,” Wilberger said. “The coaching staff was very dedicated to making everybody successful not only on the court but in the class room and in life in general.”

Wilberger averaged .92 kills per set while playing in 13 sets during the regular season. She also had 12 block assists in those 13 sets, including a career-high eight in the final regular season match against Baylor.

“She had eight blocks against Baylor,”

Cook said. “I told her it probably takes Cooper eight matches to get eight blocks, so she did pretty well there.

“One of the keys is going to be that offensively she has to get going. That’s been a focus in our practice with her and Sydney (Anderson) getting comfortable so she can be more of an offensive weapon for us.”

Cook has never had any doubt about Wilberger’s blocking. Her athletic ability helps with blocking but can in ways hurt when she’s attacking.

“In blocking, when she does everything right she’s way over the net,” Cook said. “In attacking there is more room for error with the set and timing because she’s in the air longer. The few times she’s been in there she’s done really well. She’s done really well in practice at times.”

Wilberger’s efforts in practice paid dividends in the postseason. Wilberger hit .308 with six kills and a block in Nebraska’s final four matchup against Penn State.

Anderson said she will try and keep Wilberger calm and confident throughout the remainder of the season.

Anderson said she would, “just keep talking to her, telling her how great she’s doing, keep setting her the ball and being confident with her. Just telling her to swing away like how she’s always been playing.”

Wilberger isn’t as vocal or intense on the court as Cooper. That’s not surprising because of the difference in their level of experience.

“I don’t think Wilberger is to that point yet,” Anderson said. “She knows her role and is going to earn it. She’ll earn the respect from her teammates for her to be careful with what she’s saying on the court and be that little fire ball out there for us.” **N**

Men's Basketball

STEVE HARLEY

BY BRIAN ROSENTHAL

Huskers set for Big 12 play

Nebraska defeated in-state rival Creighton. The Huskers began the season 6-0. They won a road game against TCU, a team that then traveled to Colorado and Texas Tech, winning at both stops.

It's funny how those highlights of Nebraska's non-conference men's basketball season became overshadowed by one stumble at home.

Granted, it was a bad stumble – a 66-64 loss to Maryland-Baltimore County in which the Huskers had to rally from a 20-point first-half deficit. Combine that with a one-point loss at Oregon State, a team that won six games last season, and it left Nebraska with a somewhat disappointing 10-3 non-conference record.

"There were a couple of games I think we should've won, and we just didn't win them," Nebraska guard Sek Henry said. "We expected better, but as long as we finish out strong it's a good thing because we easily could've just started giving up."

Nebraska did finish strong, particularly on offense. The Huskers topped 80 points in lopsided victories over Maryland-Eastern Shore and Florida A&M to conclude non-conference play. But the aforementioned losses still stick in the minds of the Huskers.

"We lost a few heartbreakers there, so I wish we could have had those in terms of wins instead



of losses, but that's the way the game is," Nebraska guard Paul Velandar said. "You're going to lose some, and hopefully as a team we'll learn from those games and just remember that when it comes down to the last five minutes when it's a two-point game, we can draw from that experience and finish off a little stronger."

What's notable is how the Huskers finally began solving zone defenses. The zone looks became an early blueprint on how to fluster coach Doc Sadler's team. It began with a 64-44 loss at then-No. 15 Arizona State, when the Huskers shot 28.9 percent. That was the first of three losses over a four-game span in which Nebraska wasn't attacking zone defenses and shot poorly.

By the end of non-conference play, though, the Huskers were shooting better than 54 percent over their final four games heading into the Big 12 Conference season. It left Sadler wondering whether his team had enough work against man-to-man defenses, something the Huskers will likely see on a regular basis in league play.

"But I'm very confident against our zone now," Sadler said. "I think our guys have had some success against it. We're shooting the ball decently."

The size-challenged Huskers have also been getting a lift from junior forward Chris Balham, the team's tallest player at 6-foot-8. Balham missed three games because of soreness in his knee, and he averaged only 6.5 minutes in the seven games he'd played before that.

But in Nebraska's final three non-conference games, Balham, who underwent special knee treatments, came off the bench and played 18, 14 and 17 minutes, respectively, combining for 18 rebounds, including 11 offensive. Nebraska's plus-14 rebounding advantage against Florida A&M was a season high.

"A lot of it was because of Chris," Sadler said.

Defensively, the Huskers held all 13 non-conference foes to fewer than 67 points, a streak that bettered the 1981-82 team that held its first 12 opponents to fewer than 67.

Nebraska is hoping for a better start to Big 12 Conference play than last season, when

the Huskers lost their first four conference games. The bright side? Nebraska regrouped and finished with a 7-9 league record. It's that finish that leads Sadler to believe his team has learned how to compete in the Big 12.

"As I told the team, it's going to be a 16-game grind," Sadler said. "The thing this team has to understand is that it's one game at a time, win or lose. You can't look back or ahead, or you can get your nose bloodied really quick in this league. I think that's what separates our level of basketball and some other people's levels. Each and every game is going to be difficult."

Henry said this team is more experienced to handle — and understand — the grind of which Sadler speaks.

"Most of us have already played in the Big 12 Tournament and the conference, and we know what we have to do to win games," Henry said. "We've got to be ready to play each game. Last

year, we didn't start off that good, but toward the end we finished out strong. Hopefully this year we can get a strong start off in the Big 12 and try to finish out strong, too."

HOT HARLEY

Senior guard Steve Harley led the Cornhuskers in scoring during non-conference play, averaging 13.5 points on 46.7-percent shooting from the field. Ade Dagunduro also averaged double-figure scoring, at 10.2, hitting 53.3 percent of his field goal attempts.

Harley and Dagunduro were the only players to start all 13 non-conference games.

Sek Henry led the team in scoring in two of the last three non-conference games, with 18 and 19 points, to improve his average to 9.8 points. His field-goal percentage was 56.3.

Ryan Anderson, a 6-4 junior, was the team's leading rebounder during non-conference play, averaging four per game, with a high of eight against TCU.

THREE-POINT THREAT

Paul Velandar was the leading 3-point shooter, hitting 36-of-75 behind the arc, 48 percent. All but seven of his field-goal attempts were 3-pointers. He hit only two of those seven shots.

Velandar scored a season-high 14 points against UMBC, hitting 4-of-4 from 3-point range.

Even though he didn't start during the non-conference schedule, he played more minutes than any Husker except Harley and Cookie Miller.

Velandar, a senior walk-on from Blacksburg, Va., is among 30 candidates for the 2008-09 Lowe's Senior CLASS Award, presented to an NCAA Division I student-athlete based on character and achievement in the classroom and community as well as on the court.

CHAPMAN GONE

Alex Chapman, the team's tallest player at 6-9, left the program at semester's end. Chapman, a sophomore, redshirted last season after transferring from Sheridan (Wyo.) College. He underwent three knee surgeries, the last in October, and never played in a game for the Cornhuskers. **N**

2008-09 MEN'S BASKETBALL (10-3, 0-0 BIG 12)

Date	Opponent, TV, Time
Nov. 7	Chadron State (exh.), W, 85-54
Nov. 16	San Jose State, W, 63-46
Nov. 19	at TCU, W 62-50
Nov. 22	Arkansas-Pine Bluff, W, 67-53
Nov. 25	Saint Louis, W, 71-57
Nov. 29	Creighton, W, 54-52
Dec. 3	Alabama State, W, 80-51
Dec. 7	at Arizona State, L, 64-44
Dec. 13	at Oregon State, L, 63-64
Dec. 20	IPFW, W, 75-48
Dec. 23	UMBC, L, 64-66
Dec. 30	South Carolina State, W, 77-63
Jan. 3	Maryland Eastern Shore, W, 88-56
Jan. 5	Florida A&M, W, 81-56
Jan. 10	Missouri, ESPN2 2 p.m.
Jan. 14	at Iowa State, 7 p.m.
Jan. 17	Kansas State, Big 12 Net, 5 p.m.
Jan. 21	at Oklahoma, ESPNU 8 p.m.
Jan. 24	Oklahoma State, Big 12 Net, 3 p.m.
Jan. 28	Kansas, ESPN2 6:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	at Texas Tech, Big 12 Net, 7 p.m.
Feb. 4	at Colorado, TBA
Feb. 7	Texas, ESPN 1 p.m.
Feb. 14	at Missouri, Big 12 Net, 12:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	Colorado, ESPNU 8 p.m.
Feb. 21	at Kansas, Big 12 Network 3 p.m.
Feb. 24	Texas A&M, ESPN2 8:30 p.m.
Feb. 28	at Kansas State, Big 12 Net, 7 p.m.
March 4	Iowa State, 6:30 p.m.
March 7	at Baylor, Big 12 Network 3 p.m.
March 11-14	at Big 12 Champ, Big 12 Net

Women's Basketball

CORY MONTGOMERY

BY TONY BOONE

Montgomery leads injured Huskers

Although it has shown some grit during the first two months of the season, the Nebraska women's basketball team faces an uphill climb in its quest for a third consecutive NCAA Tournament berth.

The Huskers open Big 12 play this month after posting a 9-4 record against a nonconference schedule that included a number of 2008 conference champions and a pair of Top 25 teams.

Considering Nebraska lost its best player - two-time, first-team all-conference forward Kelsey Griffin - for the year to an ankle injury prior to the season, a 9-4 start doesn't seem so bad. However, the Huskers had only one quality win and another near-miss against ranked Ohio State while suffering a disappointing loss to Texas-El Paso, which has an RPI well into the 200s, during nonconference play.

"I told our kids after the UTEP game that we didn't play very well in losing that game on the road," NU coach Connie Yori said. "I said our next 19 games are going to be that much harder. We're going to have to find a way to steal some. We let one go down there. We're going to have to find a way to get one, or more than one, back."

To date, Nebraska's best win was a thrilling come-from-behind victory over then-No. 24 Arizona State in a nationally-televised game at the Devaney Center on Dec. 28. The Huskers trailed the Sun Devils by 16 points in the first half before



rallying to claim a 62-58 decision.

The win over ASU seemed to rejuvenate Yori's team for its New Year's Day meeting with LSU, a team that has advanced to the Final Four each of the past five seasons, in New Orleans. A second-half run by the Tigers, however, handed NU its third consecutive road loss and spoiled what could've been a springboard into Big 12 play.

The Huskers also lost 6-foot-4 reserve Nikki Bober for the season to an ACL injury two days prior to the game, leaving the team with only two regulars that stand taller than 5-foot-10. Those two, however, were the bright spots for during the nonconference portion of its schedule. The development of junior Cory Montgomery and sophomore Catheryn Redmon on the inside highlighted the early portion of the NU season.

In her first season as a starter, Montgomery is leading the Huskers in scoring and rebounding. Redmon, meanwhile, has averaged nearly double figures in both categories since joining the lineup in early December.

The duo's play may dictate Nebraska's success in the Big 12. Guards Yvonne Turner and Dominique Kelley are averaging nearly 11 points per game each, giving NU a balanced attack offensively. But Yori said it will take more than that to stay competitive in a Big 12 Conference that currently has six teams in the Top 25, including four teams in the top seven.

"We've got to play hard, and we've got to wear people out," she said. "We've got to outplay people. We've got to get the pace of the game where we want it, and we have to play really hard all the time."

The Huskers will be tested right away in conference play, facing No. 5 Oklahoma and No. 4 Texas in their first two league games. Five other meetings with ranked foes await Nebraska in the next two months.

Making it back to the NCAA Tournament will be a tough task. NU was picked to finish eighth in the Big 12's preseason poll, and that was when Griffin was expected to play. Rallying without her to reach the 20-win mark for the third consecutive season, or even 18 wins for the fifth straight time, is going to be

a challenge.

THE HARD WAY

The Huskers missed on their first 13 field goal attempts, not hitting from the field for the first 9 minutes, 45 seconds, before battling back to upset Arizona State 62-58 before the largest home crowd of the non-conference season (4,652). They still trailed 28-19 at the intermission, matching the largest halftime deficit they have overcome during Connie Yori's seven seasons as coach.

They also rallied from a nine-point, halftime deficit to win at Missouri on Jan. 5, 2005.

Nebraska got double-figure scoring from four players, led by Yvonne Turner, who finished with 15 points. The others were Kaitlyn Burke and Catheryn Redmon with 12 points each and Dominique Kelley with 11 points – seven of them from the free throw line.

2008-09 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (9-4, 0-0 BIG 12)

Date	Opponent, TV, Time
Oct. 31	Chadron State (exh.), W, 102-30
Nov. 5	vs. Neb.-Kearney (EXH.), W, 80-69
Nov. 14	Weber State, W, 96-47
Nov. 17	at Creighton, W, 72-67
Nov. 22	Southern Utah, W, 65-57
Nov. 24	at Denver, W, 76-55
Nov. 28	vs. Butler, W, 67-54
Nov. 29	at New Mexico, L, 51-62
Dec. 2	Oral Roberts, W, 70-51
Dec. 6	Ohio State, L, 65-69
Dec. 9	Cal State Bakersfield, W, 70-57
Dec. 12	Long Beach State, W, 76-44
Dec. 20	at UTEP, L, 53-63
Dec. 28	Arizona State, W, 62-58
Jan. 1	at LSU, L, 50-64
Jan. 10	Oklahoma, 7:05 p.m.
Jan. 14	at Texas, 7 p.m.
Jan. 17	at Missouri, 5 p.m.
Jan. 21	Kansas, 7:05 p.m.
Jan. 24	Iowa State, 8 p.m.
Jan. 27	at Kansas State, 7 p.m.
Jan. 31	at Colorado, 2 p.m.
Feb. 4	Baylor, 7:05 p.m.
Feb. 8	at Texas A&M, 2 p.m.
Feb. 14	Texas Tech, Noon
Feb. 18	at Iowa State, 7 p.m.
Feb. 21	Missouri, 7:05 p.m.
Feb. 25	Kansas State, 7:05 p.m.
Feb. 28	at Kansas, 7 p.m.
Mar. 3	Colorado, 7:05 p.m.
Mar. 7	at Oklahoma State, 6 p.m.
Mar. 12-15	at Big 12 Championship

Turner, who played only 15 minutes because of foul trouble, hit two free throws with 18.9 seconds remaining to increase the lead to 61-58 and effectively put the game away.

COMEBACK KIDS

Nebraska's comeback from a 16-point deficit against Arizona State was the second-largest under coach Connie Yori. The largest was a rally from a 19-point, second-half deficit at San Diego on Dec. 28, 2002. In all, the Huskers have had comebacks from double-digit deficits eight times under Yori.

*at San Diego (2002), deficit 19, 62-61

*No. 24 Arizona State (2008), 16, 62-58

*at Missouri (2008), 14, 73-67

*at Missouri (2005), 13, 81-74

*No. 2 Baylor (2005), 13, 103-99 (3 OT)

*at Texas (2007), 11, 79-75

at Colorado (2008), 12, 80-71

Iowa State (2004), 12, 62-57

*In six of those games the Huskers trailed by double-digits in the second half.

TOPPLING RANKED TEAMS

The Huskers' victory against No. 24 Arizona State was their 11th against a top-25 opponent during Connie Yori's tenure as coach.

STARTING SUITS HER

Junior Cory Montgomery averaged 13.4 points and 7.7 rebounds during non-conference play. She had three double-doubles in the first 13 games, against UTEP (11-10), Oral Roberts (20-11) and Butler (22-11).

MORE OFFENSIVE

Junior Yvonne Turner, selected to the Big 12 All-Defensive Team last season, picked up her offensive production in non-conference play. She was second in scoring, with an 11.2 points-per-game average and led the team with 30 steals, more than twice as many as Kaitlyn Burke, next with 13. Turner also led the Huskers in 3-pointers with 23 (in 73 attempts). Going into Big 12 play, she needed only three more 3-pointers to move into the Cornhuskers' career top 10. **N**

Around the Horn

TRICIA WOO



GYMNASTICS Gymnast "Woos" Husker fans

BY TOMMY DAHLK

Senior gymnast Tricia Woo has the perfect name for a crowd favorite. Just as Husker football fans have enjoyed shouting "Ruud" or "Suh," the crowds at meets can't help but scream "Woo."

But the name is really only a small part of the reason the senior from Milpitas, Calif., has made crowds erupt during her Husker career.

"There is something in all of her routines that makes you go wow," women's gymnastics coach Dan Kendig said.

There are many different ways a gymnast can execute. Woo tends to use unorthodox methods during her routines.

"I do a lot of skills that people don't do or

don't see," Woo said.

For example, during her beam routine, Woo does a flip and her chest straddles the beam.

Woo might think on a different wavelength when she's performing, but her results have measured up to the best in the country. In 2007, she was a first-team All-American on the balance beam. In 2006, she was a first-team All-American in floor exercise.

Going into her final season, Woo has seen her share of individual laurels and has emerged as a vocal leader on the young team.

Kendig said he is looking forward to big things from Woo this season.

"Her confidence is just incredible right now," Kendig said. "We are expecting great things from her inside and outside the gym. I think she's at a point now where she sees

the light at the end of the tunnel and wants to make the best of it."

Woo said she senses the end of her competitive gymnastic days. So she is trying to make her last season memorable. However, this doesn't mean she is solely focused on individual accolades. Instead, Woo wants to focus on helping the young team improve and compete at the NCAA Championships in Lincoln this spring.

Most importantly, Woo wants to make sure she soaks it all in and has a blast. During her time in Lincoln, she has seen her ups and downs and admits she didn't have fun when she didn't perform her best.

Woo has had her share of disappointments. Last year, she said she messed up twice in the finals and didn't earn All-America honors for the first time. It was a depressing time for Woo because she wanted it so badly.

On reflection, Woo said she is going to compete her senior season with a relaxed attitude. She can deal with messing up, but she won't be able to handle not finishing with a smile on her face.

"I figure it can't get worse than last year," Woo said. "I should just enjoy this no matter what happens. It would be nice to finish out again as an All-American, but it's not my highest priority. I just really want to compete with our team. We are so together." **N**

WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS SCHEDULE

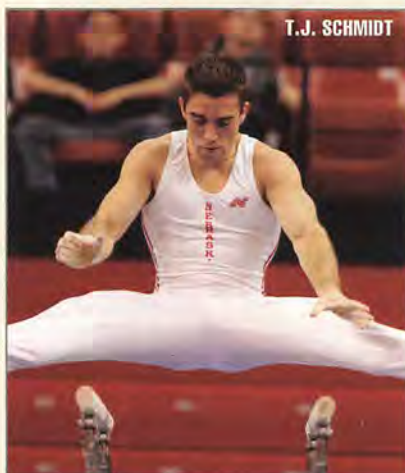
Nov. 20	#Intrasquad Meet, 2 p.m.
Dec. 13	Intrasquad Meet, 6 p.m.
Jan. 10	at Denver, 7 p.m.
Jan. 16	at Iowa State, 7 p.m.
Jan. 23	at Missouri, 6:30 p.m.
Jan. 30	*Penn State, 7 p.m.
Feb. 08	*Oklahoma, 2 p.m.
Feb. 13	*Utah, 7 p.m.
	Masters Classic
Feb. 22	*UCLA, NC State, Minnesota, 1 p.m.
Feb. 28	at Michigan, 5 p.m.
Mar. 08	*Iowa State, 2 p.m.
Mar. 13	at Arizona State, 8:30 p.m.
Mar. 13	vs. Cal State Fullerton
Mar. 15	at UCLA, 4 p.m.
Mar. 21	Big 12 Championships at Ames, Iowa, 2 p.m.
Apr. 04	at NCAA Regionals
Apr. 16-18	*NCAA Championships
	# Meet at Mable Lee Hall,
	*at Bob Devaney Sports Center

HUSKER QUICK HITS

MEN'S GYMNASTICS

The Husker men's gymnastics team, ranked No. 10, was slated to open its season at the Rocky Mountain Open on Jan. 10, with the home opener slated for Jan. 18, a dual meet against Oklahoma. Thirteen lettermen return, including senior All-American T.J. Schmidt and NCAA individual-event qualifiers junior Tony Maras (vault) and sophomore Anthony Ingelli (still rings).

The team's other seniors are James Mauldin and Jacob Ives.



IT'S ACADEMIC

Four Academic All-Americans were among 26 student-athletes who received degrees during commencement ceremonies at the Devaney Sports Center in mid-December: volleyball players Jordan Larson and Tracy Stalls, gymnast Stephen Tetrault and football player Todd Peterson.

Peterson was among nine football players receiving degrees. The others were wide receiver Nate Swift, quarterbacks Joe Ganz and Beau Davis, defensive tackle Ty Steinkuhler, defensive end Clayton Sievers, punter Dan Titchener, holder-kicker Jake Wesch and long-snapper T.J. O'Leary.

Larson and Stalls, who completed her eligibility last season, earned multiple All-America honors during their careers and helped lead the Huskers to an NCAA championship in 2006.

Also receiving degrees were – (Baseball) Jeff Christy, Bryce Nimmo and Jeff Tezak; (Track and field) Ray Scotten, Peter van der Westhuizen and Tamara Solari; (Soccer)

Tanya Dennis, Sari Raber and Brigid (Kenny) Woodhead; (Swimming) Michelle Criss and Adrienne Goodman; (Gymnastics) Tetrault, Eric Daigle and Vanessa Meloche; (Golf) Ellie Brown.

Nebraska continues to lead the Big 12 in exhausted eligibility graduation rate, at 93 percent.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

The Husker swimming team began the new year by finishing first at the seven-team UC Irvine/Ayres Invitational in its Holiday Training Trip competition. Nebraska won seven of 10 relays to finish with 423 points, 23 ahead of second-place San Jose State.

The Huskers also competed at the Tennessee Diving Invitational in Knoxville, Tenn., during the university's semester break. Senior Courtney Jolly finished 11th in the 3-meter diving, while sophomore Emily Burbach finished 17th in the 3-meter event and 39th in the 1-meter diving.

Nebraska finished 2008 by winning its first dual meet of the season with a 176-119 victory against South Dakota State at Brookings, S.D., in mid-December. Junior Mariah Hutchinson led the Huskers, finishing first in the 1,000-yard freestyle (10:38.18), the 100-yard freestyle (:53.55) and the 50-yard freestyle (:24.96). Sophomore Meredith Matthies finished first in the 200-yard butterfly (2:09.30) and 500-yard freestyle (5:18.42). And Jolly won the 1- and 3-meter diving events.

WRESTLING TEAM ROLLS

Coach Mark Manning's wrestlers, No. 3 ranked nationally, improved to 6-0 in dual competition with victories against No. 15 Michigan (22-13) and unranked Northern Colorado (39-3) at the NU Coliseum to begin 2009. Nebraska was slated to compete at the NWCA National Duals at Cedar Falls, Iowa, Jan. 10-11. Juniors Jordan Burroughs (157 pounds), Stephen Dwyer (165) and Craig Brester (197) combined for four major decisions and two technical falls in the victories against the Wolverines and Bears.

A dual against Kent State scheduled for Dec. 20 was postponed because of inclement weather.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

PHOTO COURTESY OF UNL ARCHIVES



IT'S WHAT'S UP FRONT THAT COUNTS - Linemen are a significant part of Nebraska's football tradition, going back to the beginning. Henry "Pa" Schulte stepped down as head coach following the 1920 season, after records of 3-3-2 and 5-3-1, but remained on staff to coach the Cornhuskers' linemen for nearly two decades. He mentored eight All-Americans as an assistant, including Nebraska's first two-time All-American Ed Weir (a tackle), as well as numerous first-team all-conference linemen. Roy Randels (pictured) came from St. Anthony, Neb., to earn first-team all-conference recognition as a senior in 1927, when he played right tackle on a line that included two future All-Americans, junior guard Dan McMullen and sophomore tackle Ray Richards. The 1927 team, coached by Ernie Bearg, finished 6-2, its only losses at Missouri (7-6) and at Pittsburgh (21-13). The loss against Missouri was the Cornhuskers' third in a row. As a result, they had to settle for second place in the Missouri Valley Conference (to the Tigers) for a second consecutive season.

GAMES REMEMBERED

Jan. 1, 1974 at Dallas, Texas

Nebraska 19, Texas 3

Nebraska	0	3	13	3	-	19
Texas	3	0	0	0	-	3

(T) Billy Schott 22 field goal
 (N) Rich Sanger 24 field goal
 (N) Ritch Bahe 12 run (Sanger kick)
 (N) Tony Davis 3 run (kick blocked)
 (N) Sanger 43 field goal
Attendance: 67,500

running back Roosevelt Leaks was less than full-speed because of a knee injury suffered in the final regular-season game against Texas A&M. Leaks, who finished third in voting for the Heisman Trophy, managed only 48 yards on 13 carries, barely one-third of his per-game average (141.5). Nebraska I-back **TONY DAVIS** was the game's leading rusher with 106 yards on 28 carries. His rushing total equaled that of Texas.

Davis was named the game's outstanding offensive player, but much of the attention went to Cornhusker quarterback **STEVE RUNTY**, a senior who replaced starter **DAVE HUMM** in the second half and directed the victory.

The halftime score was tied at 3 after Nebraska failed to get into the end zone on four tries from the 1-yard line as time elapsed. The Cornhuskers' first field goal was set up by defensive end **STEVE MANSTEDT**, who scooped up a Leaks' fumble and carried the ball 65 yards to the Texas 8-yard line.

What proved to be the winning points came on a **RITCH BAHE** touchdown run that followed **BOB THORNTON**'s 41-yard return of

a missed 54-yard field goal attempt midway through the third quarter. The Cornhuskers' second touchdown came a minute and a half later after middle guard **JOHN BELL** recovered a fumble at the Texas 19-yard line.

DID YOU KNOW? After the Cornhuskers finished the regular season with a 27-0 loss at Oklahoma, Rod Shoate, the Sooners' All-America linebacker, called the Cotton Bowl the "Losers Bowl." Earlier in the season Oklahoma had defeated Texas 52-13, but the Sooners were ineligible for bowl competition because of NCAA sanctions. Texas, the Southwest Conference champion, also lost its opening game at Miami 20-15. The bowl victory was Nebraska's fifth in a row. Super Bowl VIII between the Miami Dolphins and Minnesota Vikings was 12 days away. Two days before the Cotton Bowl, the Dolphins defeated the Oakland Raiders and the Vikings defeated the Dallas Cowboys by identical 27-10 scores to advance to the championship game at Rice Stadium in Houston. The Dolphins won for a second consecutive season, 24-7. Larry Csonka was the Super Bowl MVP.

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Texas was favored in **TOM OSBORNE**'s first bowl game as head coach. The Longhorns, playing in a sixth consecutive Cotton Bowl, were higher ranked, No. 8 compared to No. 11 or No. 12 depending on the poll. And, for all intents and purposes, they were playing at home. They also had a run-oriented wishbone offense - coach Darrell Royal was credited with introducing it to the college game - that averaged 350 rushing yards, fifth best in the nation. Texas also ranked fifth nationally in scoring (36.4 points) and 10th in total offense (421.8).

The match-up was expected to feature the Longhorns' running and Nebraska's passing. Instead, it featured defense, fumbles and interceptions in 30-degree weather.

The Cornhuskers shut down the Texas rushing attack, in part because All-America

CROSSWORD & TRIVIA

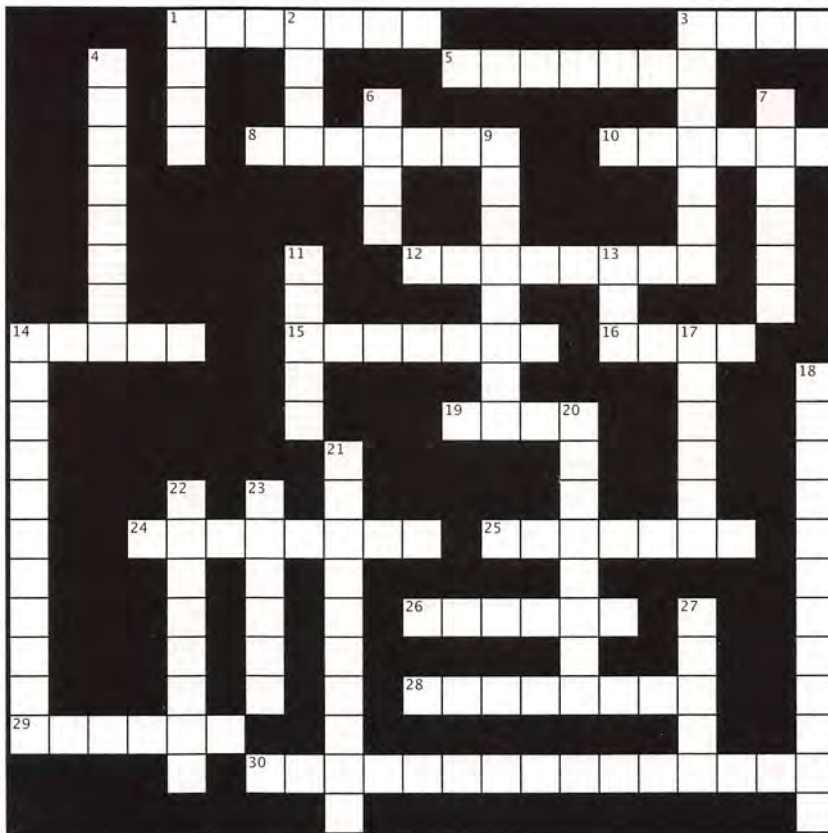
ACROSS

1. Starting Mike linebacker in Gator Bowl
3. Backup quarterback
5. Turner Gill's current school
8. Kickoff specialist
10. Senior defensive end
12. Leading receiver in Gator Bowl
14. Scored NU's first touchdown in Gator Bowl
15. Made one-handed catch in Gator Bowl
16. Defensive back who recorded sack in Gator Bowl
19. Had interception in first half of Gator Bowl
24. 1971 Outland Trophy winner
25. True freshman kickoff returner
26. Scored 14 points in Gator Bowl
28. Starting Will linebacker in Gator Bowl
29. NU's second Heisman Trophy winner
30. Opponent in 2009 opener

DOWN

1. Ex-Husker now punting for Baltimore
2. Starting I-back in Gator Bowl
3. Starting Buck linebacker in Gator Bowl
4. Opponent in 2009 Big 12 opener
6. Gator Bowl MVP
7. Has 2-0 coaching record in bowl games
9. Leading rusher in Gator Bowl
11. 2009 junior college defensive back recruit
13. Blocked field goal in Gator Bowl
14. Senior defensive tackle
17. 1972 Outland Trophy winner
18. 2009 non-conference road opponent
20. Blocked punt in Gator Bowl
21. 2010 non-conference road opponent
22. NU's last first-round pick in NFL Draft
23. Head strength coach
27. 2009 quarterback recruit

Answers will appear in the March issue



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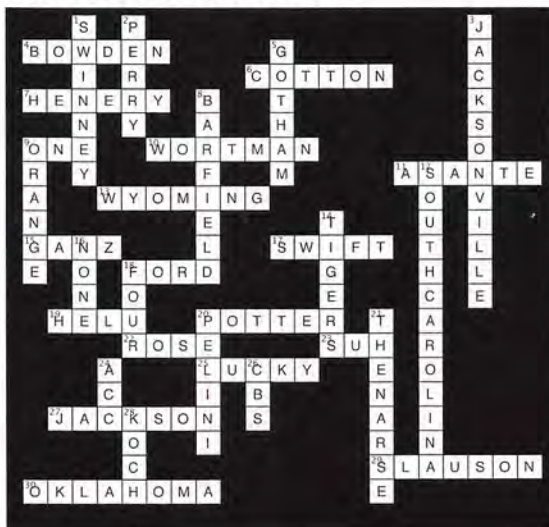
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JANUARY CROSSWORD SOLUTION





THE FINAL WORD

BY MIKE BABCOCK

Ganz content to let others decide legacy

THE SEASON ENDED this way, with the ball in the hands of Joe Ganz.

Nebraska lined up at its own 31-yard line, first-and-5 with 1:32 remaining in the Gator Bowl game. Ganz was underneath center, flanked by I-back Quentin Castille to his left and fullback Thomas Lawson to his right. Wide receiver Todd Peterson was directly behind him, about 6 yards deep.

Jacob Hickman snapped the ball, and Ganz knelt. On second down, he did the same, and on third down again, as the final seconds elapsed, preserving the 26-21 score.

"That's the best play in college football, when our quarterback takes a knee," safety Matt O'Hanlon said later of the consecutive 1-yard losses charged to the team. "It's a good feeling."

The celebration began before the clock read 0:00. Clemson could do nothing, its timeouts used. The final snap came with 10 seconds or so remaining. Ganz raised the ball in victory. Coach Bo Pelini, soaked with Gatorade, was already hugging players on the sideline by then.

The trophy presentation ceremony began while Cornhusker tight ends coach Ron Brown was still delivering a prayer at midfield, in the midst of players from both teams.

Ganz continued to clutch the ball from the final snap as he celebrated, finishing by slapping hands with Nebraska fans who lined the wall behind the north end zone at Jacksonville Municipal Stadium. He completed the half-circle and headed down the tunnel to the locker room, only to return.

He ran back onto the field, where offensive

coordinator and quarterbacks coach Shawn Watson stood, the last of the coaches and players to exit. The two hugged.

"We said we love each other and we're going to miss each other," Ganz told reporters in the hallway near the locker room. "It's going to be weird not seeing him."

Ganz called Watson by his nickname, "Wats."

"It was an appropriate end to a brilliant career of persistence and perseverance," Watson said. "It's a brilliant career because he saw his way through all of that. I remember when I first got here I didn't quite know Joe, and everybody was trying to replace him with the 'next' guy."

"He hung in there and became the two (top back-up). Then he battled Sam (Keller), and everybody didn't think it was going to be that close. But it was that close. That's just who he is."

Ganz was asked who he was, what his Nebraska legacy would be.

"I don't know," he said. "Whatever you guys want to write about me . . . whatever my teammates and coaches remember me as is good enough for me. I just hope they remember me as a kid who shut up and worked hard, never complained about anything, just left everything I had on the field."

He did that against Clemson, despite being banged up. He took a helmet to the shin and suffered a deep-thigh bruise, both to his right leg, "so I was a little gimpy," he said.

In the fourth quarter, he was dinged and had to leave the game briefly. Peterson said he knew Ganz would return. "I'm glad I didn't

make a liar out of Todd," said Ganz, who missed only one snap.

Everyone plays through such things. It's football, after all. But typically, quarterbacks don't alternate as players at other positions can, and do.

"He epitomizes what this team is," Pelini said. "He had some bad things happen to him in that first half. There are a lot of kids who aren't as strong, don't have as much character, who would have wilted under that type of circumstances. Joe just kept going, the same way the rest of the team did."

"They don't panic. They don't point fingers. They don't feel sorry for themselves. And they keep playing. It takes mental toughness to do that, and I think Joe epitomizes that."

Even though his career was brief, a back-up until his final three games as a junior, Ganz has earned a place among Nebraska quarterbacks – and those in particular who emerged for a single shining season, Gerry Gdowski (1989) and Keithen McCant (1991) prominent among them.

Ganz has always brought along his teammates in his comments to reporters, crediting his receivers and offensive line, crediting running backs for opening up the passing game, and crediting a defense that came along as the season progressed, a 9-4 season with a bowl victory.

He brought them along again. The victory was "vintage," he said. It "just kind of sums up not just my career but our senior class's career. We've never given up, and we've fought through everything."

He still held the ball from the final snap. **N**

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